

6 NATION Demographic changes in border districts most serious challenge: Amit Shah
7 NE Seven Dalits injured in gang attacks in south TN
Manipur can only progress when all 36 communities of state develop together
Nagaland reviews state's monsoon preparedness

State's first 'Blue Valley Cluster' - a new industrial hub - launched Assam moving to centre of India's economy: EU envoy

GUWAHATI, June 9: Ambassador of the European Union to India Herve Delphin on Tuesday asserted that Assam is not at the periphery of India's geography, but the northeastern state is moving to the centre of its economy.

Addressing a press conference here on the second day of the European Union delegation's high-level visit to the state, Delphin said that the EU has been engaging with and supporting the development of the northeast region, particularly Assam.



Investors look around the world 'in different geographies where there are opportunities, and it is evident that there are certain distinct advantages that Assam has', he said.

The Prime Minister who brought Delhi closer to Assam

By: Himanta Biswa Sarma
A generation in Assam grew up with a quiet but persistent sense of alienation. It was taught, by experience as much as by politics, to believe that Delhi looked upon Assam and the North East with indifference.

Twin initiatives to ensure impregnable border: Shah



NEW DELHI, June 9: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Tuesday said the government's Land Port Management System (LPMS) and Smart Border initiatives will together create an impregnable and secure border, curbing illegal activities.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Shah said. He said land ports have played an important role in the overall development of border areas, promoting legitimate trade and finding solutions to challenges like migration.

Zubeen death case: Court examines 5 more witnesses

GUWAHATI, June 9: The trial in the alleged murder case related to the death of celebrated Assamese singer Zubeen Garg continued on Tuesday with the examination of five more prosecution witnesses before a fast-track court here, taking forward the judicial proceedings in one of Assam's most closely watched criminal cases.

14 Kuki hostages released after month in Manipur

IMPHAL, June 9: Nearly a month after 14 Kuki individuals were abducted by armed groups in Manipur's Senapati district, all the hostages were released on Tuesday, an official said.

Sanae Takaichi's three-day Assam visit from July 1 Japan PM may hold talks with Modi in Guwahati

GUWAHATI, June 9: Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi is likely to arrive here on a three-day visit to Assam from July 1 to hold summit-level talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said here on Tuesday.

Speaking at the launch of the pilot project of Blue Valley Cluster - Fragrances, Flavours and Ayush in collaboration with the European Union, the Chief Minister said that there is a possibility of summit-level talks between the two Prime Ministers here.



Memorandum submitted to Himanta Clauses 5.1 (a) and (b) of MoS with Kuki rebel groups opposed

DIPHU, June 9: The Autonomous State Demand Committee (ASDC), and its frontal organisations Karbi Nimso Chingthur Asong (KNCA), a Karbi women's organization, the ASDC Youth Front, and the Jemson Timung-led Karbi Students Association (KSA)—submitted a joint memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma, on Tuesday.

Minister's attention that the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution makes no provision for reserving seats in an Autonomous Council for any specific tribe. Instead, it frameworks reservation broadly for Scheduled Tribes (STs) as a whole.

Consequently, the party argues that designating MAC constituencies exclusively for the Kuki tribe directly violates the foundational spirit of the Sixth Schedule. Furthermore, the memorandum states that ground realities and demographics in both hill districts do not support the feasibility of creating these exclusive zones.

High-level review meeting on Pumped Storage Projects held in Diphu KA moves towards sustainable energy



KHERONI, June 9: Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC) Chief Executive Member (CEM) and MLA Tuliram Ronghang chaired a high-level review meeting on Monday to assess the progress of Pumped Storage Projects (PSPs) aimed at boosting hydroelectricity generation in Karbi Anglong and West Karbi Anglong districts.

The meeting, held at Kajir Ronghangpi Guest House in Taralango, focused on fast-tracking these critical clean energy initiatives to ensure reliable power supply and promote sustainable development across the twin hills districts.

Minister bats for increasing agricultural production Pijush Hazarika holds departmental review meeting in Nagaon

NAGAON, June 9: Newly-appointed guardian minister of Nagaon district, Pijush Hazarika, visited Nagaon today and assumed the office of the guardian minister of Nagaon district. Besides, he also held a detailed review of the work and functioning of all government departments.



Under the 'Mukhyamantri Atmanirbhar Asom Abhijan', arrangements will be made for 10 lakh youths for self-employment, the minister informed. He added that beneficiaries of loans under the scheme must ensure proper utilization and work diligently.

rigation schemes in Nagaon cover only a very small area of farmland, the minister directed officials to prepare an action plan immediately to revive defunct or non-functional projects. He announced that he would visit Nagaon again soon to conduct a detailed review of every department's performance.

Southwest monsoon covers N Bengal, NE states

KOLKATA/SHILLONG, June 9: The southwest monsoon, which set over Kerala on June 4, marking the beginning of the four-month-long rainy season in India, advanced into North Bengal and the northeastern states on Tuesday.

# Market snaps two-day losing streak; Sensex gains 400 pts on strong global cues

**MUMBAI, June 9:** Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty found firmer ground on Tuesday after sliding for the past two sessions, propelled by intense buying in banking and financial stocks amid a recovery in global markets and easing crude prices.

Signs of easing tensions in West Asia added to markets' optimism, but unrelenting foreign fund outflows capped the gains, traders said.

In a volatile trade, the 30-share BSE Sensex climbed 394.50 points, or 0.54 per cent, to settle at 73,918.76. During the day, it jumped 511.15 points, or 0.69 per cent, to 74,035.41.

A total of 2,782 stocks advanced, while 1,423 declined and 193 remained unchanged on the BSE.

The 50-share NSE Nifty ended 119.10 points, or 0.52 per cent, higher at 23,242.10. Intra-day, the benchmark index climbed 156.4 points, or 0.67 per cent, to 23,279.40.

"Indian equity markets ended higher as easing tensions between Israel and Iran helped improve investor sentiment and drive a recovery in risk assets.

"Global markets also traded firmly in positive territory, supported by a combination of easing geopolitical risks, softer oil prices and renewed optimism surrounding the technology and AI sectors," Ponnudi R, CEO of Enrich Money, an online trading and wealth tech firm, said.

Among the Sensex firms, InterGlobe Aviation, State Bank of India, ICICI Bank, Axis Bank, Bajaj Finance and Asian Paints were the major



winners.

On the other hand, Titan, NTPC, Power Grid and Tech Mahindra were among the laggards.

The BSE MidCap Select index jumped 1.50 per cent, and the SmallCap Select index went up by 1.33 per cent.

"The standout performer was the PSU banking space, which significantly outperformed the broader market. A major catalyst came from the RBI's recent initiatives aimed at improving banking system liquidity and reducing funding costs.

"These measures are expected to benefit large public sector lenders, leading to renewed buying interest across names such as Bank of Baroda, Canara Bank and Bank of India," Hariprasad K, Research Analyst and Founder, Livelong Wealth, said.

Sectorally, PSU Bank surged 3.83 per cent, MidSmall Private Banks Quality Tilt jumped 3.06 per cent, Bankex (2.18 per cent), Services

(2 per cent), Realty (1.76 per cent), Financial Services (1.60 per cent) and Top 10 Banks (1.59 per cent).

In contrast, IT, Utilities and Focused IT were the laggards.

Brent crude, the global oil benchmark, declined 1.66 per cent to USD 92.69 per barrel.

In Asian markets, South Korea's Kospi, Japan's Nikkei 225 and Shanghai's SSE Composite index ended higher, marking a rebound from the sharp losses in the previous trade, while Hong Kong's Hang Seng index settled lower.

The Kospi surged 8.18 per cent, the Nikkei 225 index climbed 2.17 per cent, and the SSE Composite index went up by 1.28 per cent.

Markets in Europe were trading in the positive territory.

US markets ended mostly higher on Monday.

"Domestic markets are witnessing a mild recovery after the recent sharp decline, supported by a pause in Iran-Israel tensions and softer crude prices. However, sentiment remains fragile, with continued FII outflows and higher bond yields highlighting persistent concerns around evolving global macro dynamics," Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Investments Limited, said.

Meanwhile, Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth ₹ 5,555.67 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

On Monday, the Sensex tumbled 719.08 points, or 0.97 per cent, to close at 73,524.26. The Nifty settled 243.70 points, or 1.04 per cent, lower at 23,123. (PTI)

## ATF prices rise about 10 pc as oil companies roll out fixed pricing

**NEW DELHI, June 9:** Aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices were raised by around 10 per cent on Tuesday as state-owned fuel retailers rolled out a price stabilisation regime, offering domestic airlines a fixed fuel rate for up to three years in a move aimed at shielding carriers and passengers from sharp swings in global oil prices.

Jet fuel for domestic airlines will now cost ₹ 115 per litre, up from ₹ 104.927, industry sources said.

The new rate will be locked in for up to three years for airlines that opt to participate in the government-backed price stabilisation scheme.

Airlines that do not opt for the scheme will pay market-linked prices, currently around ₹ 142 per litre, similar to international carriers.

Those opting into the price stabilisation scheme will continue to receive ATF at ₹ 115 per litre, insulated from global benchmark fluctuations. While non-participating carriers will benefit from price declines, they will also face higher costs when international rates rise.

Sources said the scheme is completely voluntary, and airlines will have to take a call if they want to participate in it.

Under the voluntary scheme, participating airlines will pay a fixed free-on-board (FOB) benchmark price of ₹ 86.32 per litre, plus airport charges, oil company margins and applicable taxes, resulting in an effective selling price of ₹ 115 per litre in Delhi, ₹ 114.5 in Mumbai and ₹ 139 in Chennai.

The new rate compares with a below-market level of about ₹ 105 per litre in Delhi, which had remained unchanged for more than two months after the government allowed only a partial pass-through of higher global fuel costs triggered by the outbreak of the West Asia conflict in late February. The freeze had led to losses for oil marketing companies on aviation turbine fuel (ATF), similar to pressures seen in petrol, diesel and LPG segments.

To address these losses, the Union Cabinet approved a ₹ 10,000-crore price stabilisation scheme aimed at capping ATF prices and shielding airlines from volatility linked to geopolitical tensions, while also supporting the financial health of state-owned oil companies.

Under the scheme, whenever global benchmark prices rise above the base rate of ₹ 86.32, the government will provide an interest-free advance to oil marketing companies to cover the difference. When prices fall, the differential will be recovered from the companies and returned to the Consolidated Fund of India.

ATF typically accounts for about 40 per cent of airline operating expenses and can rise to as much as 60 per cent during periods of sharp volatility.

Sources said international jet fuel prices had climbed to as high as ₹ 142 per litre in May from pre-war rates of ₹ 60.50 per litre, raising concerns over airline operating costs and potential fare increases. (PTI)

## Centerfruit brings back the magic of 'Kaisi Jeebh Laplapayee'

HT Bureau

**JORHAT / GUWAHATI, June 9:** Centerfruit from the house of Perfetti Van Melle India returns with a new expression of its iconic "Kaisi Jeebh Laplapayee" platform with a brand-new ad film. Continuing the momentum of last year's campaign that re-established Centerfruit's irresistible taste, the brand now takes the "Kaisi Jeebh Laplapayee" universe forward with a hilarious new story set at an Indian wedding, where one irresistible laplap moment helps crack a robbery in the most unexpected way.

At the heart of the campaign is a brand-new ad film set against the backdrop of a bustling Indian wedding. When a robbery takes place amidst the celebrations, the police turn to CCTV footage to identify the culprit. What follows is a classic Centerfruit-style twist. As soon as Centerfruit enters the frame, events begin to unfold at an unbelievable pace, allowing the police to fast-forward through the footage and catch the thief in record time. Packed with humour, absurdity and a classic Centerfruit-style twist, the film brings alive the brand's signature ability to create moments that is impossible to resist.

Building excitement ahead of the campaign launch, Centerfruit kick-started the conversation with a series of innovative pre-buzz engagements designed to make India go Laplap before the TVC launch.

## Bandhan Bank partners with Centrum Finserve to launch integrated '3-in-1' account

**KOLKATA, June 9:** Bandhan Bank on Tuesday announced a partnership with Centrum Finserve Ltd to launch an integrated 3-in-1 account that combines banking, demat and trading services on a single platform.

The offering will enable customers to open and operate banking, demat and trading accounts through a paperless process using the lender's branch network and digital channels, it said in a statement. The

platform will provide access to investment products such as equities, IPOs, derivatives, ETFs and indices, along with trading features including chart-based execution, algorithmic strategies and margin leverage, it said.

Bandhan Bank MD and CEO Partha Pratim Sengupta said the partnership would help make financial services more accessible, and provide customers with seamless investment opportunities through a single

platform. Executive Chairman of Centrum Group Jaspal Bindra said the collaboration reflects the group's commitment to democratising investment opportunities by offering a secure and simplified experience.

The bank said the initiative comes amid growing retail participation and digital adoption in India's investment ecosystem, and is designed to provide customers a unified way to manage their banking and investment needs. (PTI)

## GOVERNMENT OF ASSAM OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COMMISSIONER:: WEST KARBI ANGLONG:: HAMREN

de.westkarbianglong@gov.in

No. WKAH/NAZARAT-12/MISC-I/2025-26/100 June 4, 2026

### NOTICE INVITING QUOTATION

Sealed quotations are hereby invited affixing non refundable court fee Stamp worth Rs 8.25 (Rupees eight and twenty five paise) only from intending local firms / suppliers for supply of the office stationary articles and other office equipment's to O/o District Commissioner, West Karbi Anglong, Hamren. The quotation will be received upto 2.00 P.M. of 16/06/2026 and will be opened on the same day in presence of tenderers or their representative if any.

For details, intending quotationers may visit office of the District Commissioner, West Karbi Anglong, Hamren during office hours.

Sd/-

District Commissioner  
West Karbi Anglong: Hamren

Contd. from Page 1...

## Assam moving to centre

Chief Minister Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma said: "Assam's partnership with the European Union reflects our shared vision of building resilient, sustainable and innovation-driven economies that create opportunities for our people while strengthening India-Europe cooperation."

"We see immense potential for collaboration across strategic sectors, including semiconductors and electronics, defence and aviation, tea, agarwood, organic foods, natural fragrances and flavours, and AYUSH-based wellness products, where Assam and the wider North-East region possess unique strengths and global market opportunities," he said. "Through initiatives such as the Blue Valleys platform, we aim to connect thousands of farmers, women-led self-help groups, startups, researchers and industries with international value chains, enabling inclusive growth, technology transfer, quality employment and sustainable prosperity across Assam and the North-East," he added.

The programme included a visit by the European delegation to Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test Private Limited (TSAT) at Jagiroad, providing first-hand exposure to Assam's growing role in advanced manufacturing and industrial transformation. The 4P (public-private-people-partnership) cluster will seek to connect Europe, Northeast India and Bhutan, promoting innovation, research, sustainable manufacturing and business collaborations. The pilot project, led by the Assam government, is aligned with the 'Blue Valleys' initiative, which was introduced at the EU-India Summit held earlier this year.

Besides this project, other areas of interest for the EU are green energy and the emerging ecosystem of digital technology, with the delegation visiting the Jagiroad plant of Tata Electronics on Monday, Delphin said.

Delphin said he was honoured to be in Assam last year during the 'Advantage Assam Summit 2.0'.

"We are putting the focus on the northeast and three years ago, there was a joint conference with the Indian ministry of external affairs in Shillong on the importance of connectivity," he said. (PTI)

## Twin initiatives to ensure

Shah said land ports have not only enhanced business but have also strengthened security and helped convert illegal trade into legal trade. He said the LPMS is being launched on a historic day, when Modi completed 12 years in the nation's service, marking 4,398 continuous days as the prime minister.

Shah said on June 10, Modi will become the longest-serving prime minister of the country, breaking the record of the first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. He said after taking charge in 2014, Modi has made public welfare his watchword and the last 12 years have been a testimony to providing basic facilities to the country's deprived citizens.

The home minister said a fundamental change has occurred in the country's democracy over the last 12 years. "We all know that dynasticism, casteism and corruption had become festering wounds in our democratic system, and people were habituated to living with those. Prime Minister Modi brought fundamental changes in the system by introducing the politics of performance," he said.

The politics of performance replaced the politics of caste, corruption and dynastic influence, and as a result, governments kept getting reelected in the states, bringing stability in policies and making it easy to implement and monitor those, he added.

"If anyone could be credited for the introduction of the politics of performance, it is Narendra Modi," Shah said. He said Modi has always considered power as "sadhana" (dedication) and serving the country has been his mission. (PTI)

## 14 Kuki hostages released

in the presence of police and security forces," the official said.

UNC president Ng Lorho said the hostages were set free following appeals by the central and state governments, church bodies and apex tribal organisation.

"Nagas are cultured people. We respect human rights. We also took into consideration the assurances made by Union Home Minister Amit Shah to Nagaland Chief Minister N Rizo that the missing six Nagas would be traced," Lorho said.

More than 50 people were abducted and held hostage by armed groups in Kangpokpi and Senapati districts on May 13, hours after three church leaders were killed in an ambush in Kangpokpi district.

Of them, 31 people have been released, including 12 Naga women from Konsakhul village and 16 Kukis from Kangpokpi district earlier. Two Salesian brothers had also been set free.

Six Naga men, however, continued to be held hostage, and their whereabouts are not yet known.

After discussions with all stakeholders, the UNC facilitated the safe release of all the 14 Kukis and handed them over to the district administration, police and security forces, Lorho said.

One of the released men, Paotinkai Chongloi of Taphou Kuki village, said, "We were detained for 27 days under the Naga Village Guard. We were treated well and provided with good food."

The chief minister lauded the Naga society for its role in securing the safe release of the hostages and termed this act "a spirit of compassion, responsibility, and concern for human life".

Singh also stressed that the present crisis inflicts immense suffering on victims and their families and assured people that strict legal action would be taken against those involved and that justice would be served.

According to officials, the 14 Kukis could have been set free on June 1, but the UNC had cancelled their scheduled release following disagreements with certain youth leaders and "stakeholders" of the tribal community of the northeastern state which has been in the grip of violence for three years.

At least 260 people have been killed and thousands rendered homeless since May 2023 due to ethnic violence in Manipur between the valley-based Meiteis and the Kukis who live in the hill districts.

Following continued ethnic clashes and the resignation of then chief minister N Biren Singh, the state was placed under President's Rule on February 13, 2025. It was lifted nearly a year later on February 4. (PTI)

## Clauses 5.1 (a) and (b) of MoS

Article 244(A) of the Indian Constitution remains unfulfilled. Implementing clauses 5.1 (a) and (b) ahead of this constitutional commitment would open a "pandora's box" of complications for both the government and the inhabitants of the three hill districts.

Additionally, the memorandum raised serious allegations regarding the existence of "double voter lists" among certain sections of the Kuki population. Citing a high-profile example, the ASDC noted that a former MLA who once represented the Diphu MLA constituency is now a permanent resident in the Churachandpur district of Manipur. The party raised doubts about whether his name continues to remain on the voter rolls in Diphu, warning that this case is likely "only a tip of the iceberg" and that a proper investigation could uncover extensive voter duplication across state lines.

The ASDC, KSA, and KNCA have jointly urged the Chief Minister to halt any further implementation of the contentious clauses and scrap them entirely. Briefing media persons during an evening press conference held at the ASDC Central Committee Office, ASDC President Sonasing Terang reiterated that no Sixth Schedule autonomous council in India specifies reservations for an individual community.

"In KAAC, seats are not reserved for one particular tribe; they are open to all Scheduled Tribes recognised by the council. What the Kuki insurgent groups are demanding simply cannot be accepted," Terang stated.

While acknowledging that development is vital across all pockets of the district, Terang emphasised that progress "does not mean seats should be surrendered to one tribe or community."

Echoing these concerns, ASDC Secretary Daniel Teron detailed the history of local governance to validate the party's stance.

"Since 1952, Sixth Schedule councils were created across northeastern states to protect local culture, language, customs, and identity. These councils continue to exist in Karbi Anglong, NC Hills, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and more recently in Tripura and Bodoland," Teron explained. "In none of these councils is a seat reserved exclusively for a single community. Even here in Karbi Anglong, it is not written that KAAC seats are reserved solely for the Karbi tribe. They are meant for all recognised tribes. The demand in the MoS is fundamentally infeasible and goes against constitutional spirit. Clause 5.1 a & b must be scrapped."

## High-level review meeting

for long-term power stability and green energy growth in the region.

The review meeting was attended by a distinguished gathering of dignitaries, including: Amarsing Tisso, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha), Several MLAs, Executive Members (EMs), and Members of Autonomous Council (MACs), Speaker and Deputy Speaker of KAAC, KK Dwivedi, Additional Chief Secretary to the Chief Minister of Assam and Power Department, Dilip Terang, Principal Secretary, KAAC, Secretaries of Revenue and Forest Departments, KAAC, District Commissioner, Karbi Anglong, Senior Superintendent of Police, Karbi Anglong, Officials from APDCL, Representatives of project stakeholders and other senior officials.

Top officials associated with the Pumped Storage Projects presented detailed updates on the current status, challenges, and the way forward for the initiatives.

The meeting underscored the collaborative efforts of the KAAC administration, state government officials, and project implementing agencies to realize these environmentally sustainable hydropower projects, which are expected to significantly contribute to the region's energy security and overall development.

## Pijush Hazarika holds

District Commissioner Devashish Sarma welcomed the minister at the start of the meeting and assured that all officials are committed to taking the district forward based on his guidance.

Earlier in the day, Hazarika also attended a similar review meeting in Hojai district, stated in an official press release here.

## Piyush Goyal highly lauds

Litchis were dispatched to Dubai directly from the festival venue on June 7. This was followed by a consignment of 500 kg to Singapore and a special shipment of 10,300 litchis to the Prime Minister's Office. Since the festival, farmers, packers, and export stakeholders have reported a surge in activity with enquiries pouring in from several countries seeking regular supplies of the prized fruit.

Meanwhile newly appointed Guardian Minister of Sonitpur district Biswajit Daimary who attended a review meeting with district administration officials and MLAs in Tezpur on Tuesday was presented with GI-tagged Tezpur litchis as a ceremonial gift.

## Southwest monsoon covers

It has forecast heavy rain in the north Bengal districts of Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Alipurduar, Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar till June 13. Thunderstorms and light to moderate rain are likely in some of the south Bengal districts, which are experiencing humid and discomforting weather, the India Meteorological Department said in its forecast till June 15.

Meteorologists said the advance of the monsoon was aided by favourable atmospheric conditions, including a cyclonic circulation over the region and strong southwesterly winds.

The IMD expects rainfall in India to be around 90% of the long-period average (LPA) this year.

The LPA refers to the rainfall recorded in a specific region over a defined period, such as a month or season, averaged over a long duration, typically 30 to 50 years. (PTI)

### AFFIDAVIT

I, Sri Bidya Sing Tisso son of Late Phangkiri Tisso resident of Men Ronghang village, PO+PS: Diphu, Karbi Anglong, would like to mention that in my Pass book of Langpi Dehangi Rural Bank now Assam Gramin Vikash bank, Diphu branch bearing A/C No. 7415010054352, my name wrongly recorded as Bidya Tisso instead of my actual and correct name i.e Bidya Sing Tisso.

### AFFIDAVIT

I, Pradip Kumar Nandi, S/o Late Pramesh Chandra Nandi, Resident of Village: Pubkandhulimari, P.O.: Jugjjan Bazar, District: Hojai, Assam, do hereby declare vide a notarial affidavit executed on 19 May, 2026 in Hojai that my name appears as "Pradip Nandi" in some of my documents and as "Pradip Kumar Nandi" in some other documents. Both names refer to one and the same person, namely myself. Henceforth, I shall be known as Pradip Kumar Nandi for all official purposes.

### AFFIDAVIT

I, Kanamani Mithi, C/o Pishni, a resident of Boraml, P.O Bargaon, PS. Baithalango, district West Karbi Anglong (Assam), through this affidavit before the Notary Public, Morigaon, dated 5th May, 2026, would like to state here that my actual name is Kanamani Mithi, which has been recorded in my Aadhaar Card vide Aadhaar No. 9701 8324 6752, PAN Card vide PAN No. EEEPM 6180M and Voter ID Card vide EPIC No. JRF5239281, but my Passbook of Langpi Dehangi Rural Bank, Bargaon Branch vide A/c No. 7469010093825, my name has been recorded as Mrs. Honmani Mithi instead of Kanamani Mithi.

The names Kanamani Mithi and Mrs. Honmani Mithi is the same and one person.

### ENGINEERING WORKS IN LUMDING DIVISION

Tender Notice No.: LMG/Engg/41 of 2026. Dated: 03-06-2026. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **SN.1: Brief Description of Item** : Provision of construction of RPF Barrak at Haibargaon (20 bedded Capacity) under jurisdiction of Sr. DEN/II Lumliding. **Tender Value:** ₹2,24,42,264.45/- **Earnest Money:** ₹4,48,800/- **Date & time of closing of tender at 15:00 hrs. on 29-06-2026 and opening at 15:00 hrs. on 30-06-2026.** Complete information alongwith the tender document of above e-tender will be available up to 15:00 hrs. on 29-06-2026 in the website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in)

DRM(W)/Lumliding  
NORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY  
Serving Customers With A Smile

# Fake lottery scam using temple's name exposed in KA

**HT Correspondent**

**DOKMOKA, June 9:** A sensational lottery fraud case has come to light in the Langhin area under the jurisdiction of Dokmoka Police Station in Karbi Anglong district.

Reports indicate that a group of miscreants has allegedly been selling fake lottery tickets by illegally using the name and address of the local Bogadol Shri Shri Ganesh Temple.

The matter came to the attention of the temple management committee on June 5 following a news report broadcast by a media portal. The report revealed that an unscrupulous group was organising a lottery event under the guise of the temple's identity.

Addressing a press conference



on the incident, office-bearers of the temple committee categorically denied any involvement.

"No such lottery or game has been organised by our Bogadol Shri Shri Ganesh Temple Commit-

tee. The temple authorities are completely unrelated to this activity. Someone has stolen the temple's identity and address to run this fraudulent lottery scam," a committee representative stated.

Seeking a thorough investigation into the matter, the temple management committee lodged a formal First Information Report (FIR) at Dokmoka Police Station on June 6. The committee urged the local administration and police to take strict legal action against the fraudulent racket and ensure that justice is served.

Meanwhile, the temple committee has issued a public appeal urging citizens to remain vigilant. It noted that incidents of identity and address theft for the sale of fake lottery tickets are on the rise across the state. The committee advised people to verify the authenticity of such tickets before purchasing them and to stay away from fraudulent schemes.

# Nagaon University, Art Village Sign MoU to boost heritage and cultural research

**HT Correspondent**

**NAGAON, June 9:** In a significant step towards the preservation and promotion of Assam's rich cultural heritage, Nagaon University and Art Village, Nagaon (Museum and Research Centre) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen collaboration in the fields of heritage preservation, research, education, museum development and traditional arts.

The MoU aims to create a strong academic and cultural partnership that will benefit students, researchers, artists and the wider community. Under the agreement, both institutions will work together to promote and preserve Assam's traditional art forms, including the unique traditions of Sanchipat manuscripts and Puthi Chitra (manuscript painting).

As part of the collaboration, the two institutions will jointly undertake research, documentation and publication projects related to tradi-

tional art and cultural heritage. The agreement also provides opportunities for internships, hands-on training and practical learning experiences for students, enabling them to gain valuable exposure to heritage management, museum practices and archival studies.

A key feature of the MoU is the organisation of joint exhibitions, workshops, seminars, art camps and training programmes. These initiatives are expected to create greater public awareness about Assam's artistic traditions while providing a platform for knowledge exchange between scholars, artists and cultural practitioners.

The partnership will also focus on museum and archive development, with Art Village, Nagaon contributing its expertise in establishing structured museum and archival systems.

In addition, both institutions have agreed to promote the Indian Knowledge System (IKS) through

collaborative academic and cultural initiatives. The MoU further encourages the exploration of national and international collaborative projects, creating opportunities for broader cultural and academic engagement.

Speaking on the occasion, Sujit Das, Founder and Director of Art Village, Nagaon, expressed optimism about the collaboration. He stated that the partnership would open new avenues for the preservation, documentation and promotion of Assam's traditional art heritage and provide meaningful opportunities for students, researchers and artists.

The agreement will remain valid for an initial period of three years and may be extended through mutual consent. The collaboration is expected to contribute significantly to the safeguarding and dissemination of Assam's cultural legacy while fostering academic excellence and community engagement.

# Rape convict sentenced to 20 years' rigorous imprisonment

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, June 9:** A Special Court in Kokrajhar has sentenced convicted rapist Sanowar Hussain to 20 years of rigorous imprisonment (RI) and imposed a fine of ₹ 50,000.

According to case details presented before the court, the accused had allegedly lured a 17-year-old minor girl with a promise of marriage and sexually assaulted her. The incident came to light after the victim became pregnant. It is reported that when the accused attempted to flee, local residents intervened and apprehended him.

Following the incident, the victim's family lodged an FIR at Kokrajhar Sadar Police Station on October 27, 2022.

Based on the complaint, police initiated an investigation and subsequently filed a chargesheet against the accused.

# Assam's first dedicated grass nursery inaugurated in Manas National Park

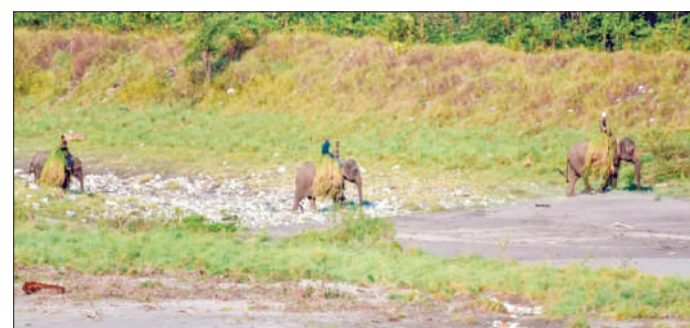
**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, June 9:** In a major step towards securing the future of Assam's endangered grassland ecosystems, the state's first dedicated grass nursery was inaugurated at the Bansbari Range of Manas National Park.

Developed over an area of approximately 1 hectare (7.5 bigha) with financial support from State CAMPA, the nursery will serve as a long-term seed source for grassland restoration and expansion across Manas and other protected areas of Assam.

The nursery was inaugurated by Dr Vinay Gupta, IFS, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden, Assam in the presence of Suman Mohapatra, IFS, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests; H Rajamohan, IFS, Field Director, Dudhwa Tiger Reserve (Uttar Pradesh); Dr C Ramesh, IFS, Field Director, Manas Tiger Reserve; T Sheshidhar Reddy, IFS, Deputy Director, Manas Tiger Reserve and other senior forest officials.

A total of 16 species of native grasses were collected from different habitats within Manas beginning in November 2025 and raised in specially prepared nursery beds. The nursery was established in May 2026 and is expected to play



a critical role in supporting large-scale ecological restoration efforts.

The initiative comes at a crucial time for Manas National Park, where recent assessments indicate that over 60 per cent of its historical grassland cover has been lost over the last three and a half decades. Grasslands that once covered approximately 384 sq km (45 per cent of the landscape) in 1990 have declined to about 155 sq km (18 per cent) today, mainly due to invasive species, woodland encroachment, altered river dynamics and prolonged interruption of habitat management in earlier decades.

These alluvial grasslands form the ecological backbone of Manas and support globally threatened wildlife, including the pygmy hog, Bengal florican, hispid hare, one-horned rhinoceros, wild water buffalo, swamp deer, Asian elephant

and tiger. It is estimated that nearly 6 sq km of grassland is lost annually, underscoring the urgent need for restoration interventions.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Vinay Gupta, IFS, CWLW (Assam), stated that restoration of grasslands is among the highest conservation priorities for Manas National Park. He said the newly established grass nursery will ensure a sustainable supply of native grass species required for habitat restoration, invasive species management and recovery of critical wildlife habitats.

The initiative marks another milestone in Manas' ongoing efforts to restore one of Asia's most important riverine grassland ecosystems and secure the ecological integrity of the UNESCO World Heritage Site for future generations.

# NFRWWO marks World Environment Day with plantation drive

**HT Bureau**

**GUWAHATI, June 9:** As part of the observance of World Environment Day 2026, the Northeast Frontier Railway Women Welfare Organisation (NFRWWO), under the leadership of its president Shalini Shrivastava, organised a tree plantation drive and distributed saplings among the students of Jagriti Shiksha Niketan, Pandu, reaffirming its commitment to promoting environmental awareness and building a greener and cleaner future.

The programme encouraged students to actively participate in environmental conservation efforts and highlighted the importance of protecting nature through plantation and sustainable practices. Saplings were distributed among the children with the message of nurturing trees and contributing to a healthier environment.

Jagriti Shiksha Niketan, Pandu, established in 1975 in the railway settlement of Pandu, began as a modest initiative and has since evolved into an important centre for primary education, catering to underprivileged children from the

Pandu and Maligaon areas. Over the past five decades, the institution has steadily progressed with the support of various organisations, benefactors and well-wishers.

Presently, under the guidance and patronage of Shalini Shrivastava, president of NFRWWO, the school provides quality education to more than 160 students from Play Group to Class V. The institution is supported by a dedicated team of teaching and non-teaching staff and places special emphasis on the holistic development of its students through academic, cultural and extracurricular activities.

As the school marks its remarkable 50-year journey of service, plans have been outlined for the further development and upgradation of facilities to create an even more conducive learning environment for the children. NFRWWO remains committed to supporting educational initiatives and community welfare programmes that contribute to the overall development of society.

# Bodoland University declares MBA results within one day of exams

**HT Correspondent**

**KOKRAJHAR, June 9:** Bodoland University has set a new benchmark in academic administration by declaring the MBA end-semester examination results within just one day of the completion of the examinations for the 2024-25 academic session.

The achievement marks a significant milestone in the history of the university and reflects its commitment to efficiency, transparency and timely delivery of academic services. According to university sources, the end-semester examinations for the MBA programme were completed successfully and the results were published the very next day, ensuring that students did not have to wait long for their academic outcomes.

The final end-semester examination of the MBA department concluded on June 4, 2026, while the examinations for MBA arrear and betterment candidates were completed on June 8, 2026. The prompt declaration of results highlights the effective planning, coordination and dedicated efforts of the Department of Management Studies, the Examination Branch and the university administration.

# Dalgaon MLA warns Panchayat representatives over corruption

**HT Correspondent**

**DALGAON, June 9:** Dalgaon MLA Mazibur Rahman has issued a stern warning to Panchayat representatives and government employees allegedly involved in corruption in welfare schemes, stating that strict action will be taken against anyone found extorting money from poor beneficiaries.

Addressing a public felicitation meeting at Bechimari on Sunday, Rahman said that he received fewer votes than expected in the recently concluded Assam Assembly election due to public resentment against corruption by Panchayat representatives and officials.

"I have never compromised in the discharge of my responsibilities as an MLA. However, the misdeeds of some Panchayat representatives and government employees have damaged the image of the government and affected public trust," he told a large gathering.

The MLA urged residents to report any instance where money is demanded in exchange for benefits under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana or any other government welfare scheme. He warned that those found guilty would not be spared and could face punitive transfers outside the constituency.

Highlighting his achievements, Rahman said that his active role in the Assam Legislative Assembly helped secure crores of rupees for anti-erosion projects on several rivers in the constituency. He also pointed to the establishment of two arts colleges during his tenure.

Expressing disappointment over the election results in Bechimari Panchayat, where he secured a lead of only 47 votes, Rahman blamed corruption and negligence among some party workers. He said that newly included Panchayat areas had given him a lead of nearly 5,000 votes, contrasting with the poor performance in Bechimari.

Rahman also criticised the leaseholders of Bechimari Market, stating that the existing lease system would be scrapped and a new committee would be formed, a statement that reportedly left the concerned leaseholders embarrassed.

# PMSMA's 10th anniversary observed in Karbi Anglong

**HT Bureau**

**DIPHU, June 9:** The 10th anniversary of the Pradhan Mantri Surakshit Matritva Abhiyan (PMSMA) was observed on Tuesday across various health institutions in Karbi Anglong district. The initiative aims to ensure quality antenatal care services for pregnant women and promote safe motherhood.

The observance was held in compliance with directives from the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India and the National Health Mission (NHM), Assam. The occasion marked a decade of the flagship maternal health initiative, which was launched on June 9, 2016. The programme is designed to provide assured, comprehensive and quality antenatal care services to pregnant women with a particular focus on those in their second and third trimesters.

As part of the observance, special PMSMA sessions were organised at District Hospitals, Community Health Centres (CHCs), Block Primary Health Centres (BPHCs), Ayushman Argya Mandirs (AAMs) and other designated health facilities across the district.

During these sessions, pregnant women availed themselves of a wide range of free services, including specialist consultations, blood and urine investigations, ultrasound

services, identification and management of high-risk pregnancies, counselling on nutrition and family planning, distribution of iron-folic acid (IFA) and calcium supplements and Td (Tetanus and Diphtheria) vaccination.

Awareness activities were also conducted to educate expectant mothers and their families on the importance of regular antenatal check-ups and institutional deliveries. Banners and Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials highlighting the significance of PMSMA and safe motherhood were prominently displayed at all participating institutions.

Health officials stated that the initiative has significantly contributed to the early detection and management of high-risk pregnancies, thereby helping reduce maternal and neonatal morbidity and mortality rates. They emphasised that the programme continues to play a vital role in strengthening maternal health-care services and ensuring healthier outcomes for both mothers and newborns.

The District Health Society, Karbi Anglong, reiterated its commitment to strengthening maternal health services and urged all pregnant women to avail themselves of the free antenatal care services available on the 9th of every month under PMSMA.

# Two convicted for illegal storage of LPG cylinders

**HT Correspondent**

**JORHAT, June 9:** Two persons were sentenced to six months' simple imprisonment along with a fine of ₹ 5,000 each by the court of the Additional Chief Judicial Magistrate, Jorhat after being convicted on charges of illegally storing a large number of domestic LPG cylinders at their shop-cum-residence in Kakojan on the outskirts of Jorhat.

In a judgment pronounced recently, Sadique Rahman and Siddique Rahman, both brothers were convicted in a case filed by the Food, Civil Supplies and Consumer Affairs (FCS&CA) Department in 2018. The case followed the seizure of 33 unauthorised domestic LPG cylinders by a joint team of the FCS&CA Department and police from the Lahdoigarh Outpost. The operation was led by Bikash Das, who was then an Inspector in the FCS&CA Department and is currently Joint Director in-charge of the Jorhat office.

The team, comprising Vinayam Krishna, Sub-Inspector, FCS&CA, Jorhat; Aditi Rajkshonikar, Sub-Inspector, FCS&CA, Jorhat and police personnel from

Lahdoigarh Outpost led by ASI Jatun Mohan, conducted a surprise raid on August 10, 2018, based on specific source information and a tip-off. During the raid at the shop-cum-residence of the accused persons, the team seized 13 filled and 20 empty LPG cylinders.

The court convicted the two accused under Section 7(1)(a)(ii) of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955, for violation of Rule 7(1)(c) of the Liquefied Petroleum Gas (Regulation of Supply and Distribution) Order, 2000, issued under Section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.

The judgment further stated that in default of payment of the fine, the duo would have to undergo an additional one month of simple imprisonment each.

However, the court acquitted another accused in the case, Phanindra Nath Phukan, a panchayat tax collector, giving him the benefit of doubt.

Welcoming the judgment, FCS&CA Joint Director in-charge Bikash Das expressed hope that the verdict would send a strong message to those involved in illegal activities.

# Conservation achievements and community participation highlighted at anniversary programme Raimona National Park celebrates 5th Foundation Day

**HT Correspondent**

**GOSSAIGAON, June 9:** The 5th Foundation Day of Raimona National Park was celebrated with enthusiasm and renewed commitment towards wildlife conservation at the Late Sujit Narzary Memorial Auditorium, Kachugaon, under the Kachugaon Forest Division on Monday.

The programme was attended by BTC Executive Member for Forests and Wildlife Paniram Brahma as the chief guest, while BTC Executive Member and MLA of No 2 Dotma LAC Rabiram Narzary attended as the guest of honour.

The programme began with the felicitation of dignitaries, the rendition of Vande Mataram, ceremonial lighting of the lamp and a cake-cutting ceremony marking the fifth anniversary of the national park. In his welcome address, Divisional Forest Officer of Kachugaon Division Mustafa Ali Ahmed highlighted the journey of Raimona National Park since its declaration on June 8, 2021. He acknowledged the contributions of frontline forest staff, Eco Devel-

opment Committees (EDCs), local communities, NGOs, the Sashastra Seema Bal, the Eco Task Force and conservation partners towards strengthening wildlife protection and conservation.

He said Raimona National Park holds strategic importance in the transboundary conservation landscape as it shares its northern boundary with Bhutan's Pibsoo Wildlife Sanctuary and western boundary with Buxa Tiger Reserve in West Bengal. The park provides habitat and corridor connectivity for several endangered species, including the Royal Bengal Tiger, Clouded Leopard, Indian Gaur, Golden Langur, Hornbills and the critically endangered White-bellied Heron.

A colourful Bagurumba dance performance added cultural vibrancy to the event, while a presentation on the biodiversity and conservation significance of the park was delivered by Sanatan Deka of the Wildlife Trust of India. Addressing the gathering, Rabiram Narzary lauded the efforts of the Forest Department and local



communities in preserving the park's biodiversity and stressed the need for greater community participation and sustainable conservation practices.

BTC Executive Member for Transport Mritunjay Narzary also appreciated the role of the Forest Department and local communities in safeguarding the rich natural heritage of the national park. Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests-cum-CHD, Forests, BTC, Suman Mohapatra, stated that the declaration of Raimona as a national park in 2021 marked a significant step towards protecting one of the ecologically important landscapes of Assam and the Bodoland Territorial Region.

He observed that the park has emerged as an example of successful conservation, community participation and transboundary cooperation over the past five years.

Certificates of appreciation were presented to several Eco Development Committees for their support in conservation activities. Frontline forest personnel from different ranges under the park were also honoured for their exemplary services in wildlife protection, anti-poaching operations, habitat management, wildlife rescue and community engagement.

In his address, chief guest Paniram Brahma congratulated the Forest Department and all stakeholders on the

successful completion of five years of Raimona National Park and reiterated the commitment of the Bodoland Territorial Council towards wildlife conservation, habitat protection and eco-tourism development in the region. The programme concluded with a vote of thanks and the National Anthem.

Declared as Assam's sixth national park on June 8, 2021, Raimona National Park has gained prominence as a model of successful conservation and transboundary cooperation, attracting researchers, conservationists and nature enthusiasts from across the country.

Among those present were BTC Executive Member for Transport Mritunjay Narzary, MCLA William Narzary, Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests-cum-CHD, Forests, BTC, Suman Mohapatra, IAS officer L. Nelson, SDPO Manuram Borah, DFO Pradip Bhuyan and representatives of conservation organisations, Eco Development Committees (EDCs), NGOs, village leaders and members of the public.

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**SALE INTIMATION AND NOTICE FOR SALE OF SECURITIES PLEDGED TO HDFC BANK LTD.**

The below mentioned Borrowers of HDFC Bank Ltd. ("the Bank") are hereby notified regarding the sale of securities pledged to the Bank, for availing credit facilities in the nature of Loans/Overdraft/Against Securities.

Due to persistent default by the Borrowers in making repayment of the outstanding dues as per agreed loans / facilities terms, the below loan / facilities accounts are in delinquent status or classified as NPA (Non-Performing Asset). The Bank has issued multiple notices / loan recall notice to these Borrowers, including the final sale notice on the below-mentioned date whereby, Bank had invoked the pledge and provided 7 days' time to the Borrower to repay the entire outstanding dues in the below accounts, failing which, Bank would be at liberty to sell the pledged securities without issuing further notice in this regard. The Borrowers have neglected and failed to make due repayments, therefore, Bank in exercise of its rights under the loan agreement as a pledgee has decided to sell / dispose off the Securities on or after 17<sup>th</sup> June 2026 for recovering the dues owed by the Borrowers to the Bank. The Borrowers are hereby notified to treat this as a notice of sale in compliance of section 176 of the Indian Contract Act, 1872. The Borrowers are, also, notified that, if at any time, the value of the pledged securities falls further due to volatility in the stock market to create further deficiency in the margin requirement then Bank shall at its discretion sell the pledged security within one (1) calendar day, without any further notice in this regard. The Borrower(s) shall remain liable to the Bank for repayment of any remaining outstanding amount, post adjustment of the proceeds from sale of pledged securities.

Sr. No.	Loan Account Number	Borrower's Name	Outstanding Amount as on 07 <sup>th</sup> June 2026	Date of Sale Notice
1	XXXXXXXXXX3793	RHEMBOR G SAIBON	9,93,857.64	08-06-2026
2	XXXXXXXXXX2286	NATHU SAH	7,389.64	08-06-2026
3	XXXXXXXXXX9802	SANTOSH KR TIWARI	42,611.00	08-06-2026
4	XXXXXXXXXX5943	IMRAN HUSSAIN	2,26,467.40	08-06-2026
5	XXXXXXXXXX6934	JAMES K SANGMA	43,28,721.60	08-06-2026
6	XXXXXXXXXX7572	BRANDON BAZELEY RYMBAL	61,783.25	08-06-2026
7	XXXXXXXXXX9836	SANTOSH KUMAR RAY	79,697.77	08-06-2026

DATE : 10.06.2026  
PLACE : MEGHALAYA  
Sd/-  
HDFC BANK LTD.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

Shoot for the moon and if you miss you will still be among the stars.- Les Brown

CJP protests

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government may have done itself a favour by allowing the Cockroach Janta Party protest led by Abhijit Dipke to proceed without turning it into another confrontation between the state and restless young citizens.

The issue at the heart of the agitation is unusually combustible. Examination irregularities are not viewed by students as a routine administrative failure.

That bargain has been under strain for some time. The explosion of competitive examinations has created a vast economy of hope, anxiety and exploitation.

The Brahmaputra mindset: Navigating the future of Assam

When we sit down to think about the future of the Assamese community, it is never just a cold academic exercise. It is an emotional journey, a deep-seated conversation that every Assamese person has with themselves at some point in their lives.



AUTHOR By: Satyabrata Borah

To understand where we are going, we first have to honestly confront the heavy winds blowing against us. The most immediate and profound worry that many of us feel is centered around our language and culture.

This is not about being against English or modern education, because learning global languages is essential. But when it happens at the cost of your own roots, the foundation of the community begins to crack.

The fear of becoming a minority in one's own homeland is not just a political talking point used during elections; it is a psychological burden that weighs heavily on the collective consciousness of the people.

is constantly under threat, which sometimes prevents us from looking forward with an open and confident heart.

Then there is the elephant in the room: our economy. For decades, Assam has been a land of paradoxes. We are blessed with some of the most fertile lands on earth, an abundance of water resources, vast forests, and rich mineral wealth.

historically lacked the industrial infrastructure and, more importantly, the entrepreneurial mindset to turn those resources into self-sustaining wealth. For generations, the ultimate dream of an Assamese youth has been a secure government job.

If we stop the conversation here, the picture looks incredibly bleak. It feels as if we are a community slowly drifting toward the margins of history. But history has shown time and again that the Assamese people have an incredible capacity for resilience.

Unlike the generations before them, today's youth are not bound by geographical limitations. Armed with the internet, digital technology, and a global outlook, they are taking Assamese identity to places it has never been before.

The Political power of beneficiary schemes

The 2026 Assam Legislative Assembly election has emerged as a defining moment in the state's political history. More than a contest between parties, it revealed a significant transformation in voter behaviour and political priorities.



DEGREE OF THOUGHT By: Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan

The overwhelming victory of the ruling BJP was not driven solely by ideological appeal or political rhetoric. Instead, it was built upon a vast network of welfare programmes that directly touched the lives of millions of people.

Among the most influential factors behind this political transformation was the strong support of women voters. Schemes such as Arunodoi played a crucial role in building trust among women, particularly in rural households.

The success of beneficiary politics was also

linked to the ruling party's organizational strength. Government schemes were not implemented in isolation. They were accompanied by an extensive communication strategy that ensured beneficiaries remained aware of the source of the assistance they received.

A notable feature of this election was the emergence of what may be described as a beneficiary class. Unlike traditional political constituencies defined by religion, ethnicity, caste, or language, this group was united by its access to government assistance.

At the same time, the rise of beneficiary politics raises important questions about governance and public finance. Welfare schemes undoubtedly provide relief to vulnerable sections of society, particularly during periods of economic hardship.



resources away from productive sectors. Supporters, on the other hand, contend that welfare schemes are necessary instruments of social justice and economic inclusion.

Another factor contributing to the effectiveness of beneficiary politics is the psychology of risk and security. Voters often prefer certainty over uncertainty. When a family is already receiving regular assistance, it may hesitate to support an alternative political force whose promises remain untested.

Beneficiary schemes also influenced public perceptions of larger issues such as unemployment and inflation. While these challenges remained significant concerns, the availability of welfare support softened their political impact.

The long-term consequences of this model are likely to shape Assam's political future. Every political party will now be compelled

to recognize the importance of direct welfare delivery. Elections may increasingly become competitions over who can offer more effective and comprehensive benefits to citizens.

Yet the rise of beneficiary politics also presents a challenge for democratic accountability. If electoral support becomes closely tied to welfare benefits, voters may become less inclined to scrutinize other aspects of governance.

The 2026 Assam election demonstrated that the politics of welfare has become a formidable force. Beneficiary schemes have evolved from policy instruments into powerful political assets capable of shaping electoral outcomes on a large scale.

The Prime Minister who brought Delhi closer to Assam

(Contd. from page-1)

Peace, too, has been central to this new chapter. There was a time when violence cast a long and fearful shadow over Assam. Insurgency, bomb blasts, kidnappings and gunfire had made uncertainty part of daily life.

Advantage Assam 2.0, with participation from 75 countries, received investment commitments worth Rs. 5.18 lakh crore. Leading groups such as Reliance, Adani, Tata, Vedanta and Jindal are now looking at Assam with seriousness and optimism.

Infrastructure tells the same story in concrete form. For decades after Independence, the mighty Brahmaputra—Assam's lifeline and defining geography—was crossed by too few bridges.

Healthcare has seen an equally important transformation. Assam, which once had to struggle for institutions of national importance, now hosts AIIMS Guwahati. Medical colleges have expanded sharply, from seven in 2021 to fourteen now.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's most lasting contribution to Assam and the North East may well be that he narrowed the psychological gap between the region and the national capital. He did so not only through policy, but through gesture and presence.

Today, Assam stands more confident, more connected and more hopeful. The old language of abandonment is steadily giving way to the language of opportunity.

On 10 June, Narendra Modi will create history by becoming the longest continuously serving elected Prime Minister of India, surpassing Jawaharlal Nehru's record. This is a moment of national significance.

I offer him my heartfelt congratulations on this historic milestone. I also pray to the Almighty to bless him with good health, long life and continued strength so that he may go on serving the nation with the same vision, conviction and dedication.

# Marine plastic pollution: The Case for sustainable biotechnology solutions

By: Poornima Vengapath Bhattathiri

Marine plastic pollution has become one of the major environmental and policy challenges of this century. Rapid industrial growth, coupled with growing consumption of single-use plastics and inefficient waste management, has contributed to a significant rise in marine plastic pollution. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) reports that more than 11 million metric tonnes of plastic enter the marine environment annually, with a cumulative plastic stock of 75-199 million tonnes. Without appropriate interventions, plastic pollution of the marine environment could triple by 2040.

In addition to environmental consequences, the crisis results in both economic and social burdens. Marine plastics contribute to approximately 85 percent of total marine litter. The economic burden impacting tourism, fisheries and coastal livelihoods was estimated at US\$6-19 billion per year. As this remains a persistent challenge, a life-cycle-based policy framework integrating marine biotechnology approaches is required for upstream waste reduction, circularity, and innovation.

The Scale of Ocean Plastic Pollution  
Plastics account for at least 85 percent of the ocean debris. Due to their durability (often over centuries), they accumulate in the ocean, rather than degrading. Over time, large plastic debris undergoes chemical, physical, and biological processes, breaking down into microplastics (<5 mm) and nanoplastics. Microplastic and nanoplastic particles are widespread, from coastal zones to deep-sea sediments and even into polar regions. Current estimates state that approximately 170 trillion plastic particles are present in the oceans, forming a "plastic smog".

The ocean, beyond being a global sink for plastic waste, offers solutions to sustainable plastic waste management.

Microplastics also pose a significant risk from a policy and health perspective because marine organisms consume them at various trophic levels and accumulate toxic pollutants such as heavy metals, and enter human food chains through seafood. In addition, global plastic production continues to increase, reaching approximately 450 million tonnes annually, while recycling rates remain below 10 percent. These trends highlight that marine plastic pollution is more than a waste management challenge; it signals a deeper failure of global material governance.

**Limitations in Conventional Strategies**  
While traditional measures to address ocean plastic pollution, such as waste management, single-use plastic ban and promoting recycling, are essential, they remain inadequate. The United Nations



Environment Programme (UNEP) emphasises the need for long-term, comprehensive intervention, particularly given the long lifespan and resulting accumulation of plastic in marine environments. Removing ocean plastics using mechanical methods is expensive and largely ineffective in tackling microplastic pollution. The Ocean Cleanup initiative has demonstrated progress in extracting microplastics from ocean gyres, even though microplastic pollution and scalability could remain significant challenges. Coastal cleanup initiatives in India, such as the Swachh Sagar Surakshit Sagar initiative, have improved awareness and coastal cleanliness; however, they remain limited in addressing plastic leakage upstream.

Marine plastic pollution is more than a waste management problem. It reflects a deeper, structural issue of material governance globally.

Biodegradable plastics do not offer a comprehensive solution, as they require specific conditions for degradation and persist in the marine ecosystem for long durations. These limitations have led to a rising interest in marine biotechnology as a complementary and transformative approach. Similarly, many initiatives for coastal cleanup largely remain symbolic, failing to address the root cause or generate public awareness. At the same time, local communities with traditional knowledge of sustainability are often sidelined in policy and decision-making processes. For instance, mangrove-dependent communities are rarely included

in coastal development conversions and community-led beach management is often sidelined by top-down cleanup initiatives.

**Marine Biotechnology-Based Solutions**  
Marine biotechnology utilises biological systems such as enzymes, microorganisms and algae to mitigate environmental challenges. It provides novel pathways for the biodegradation and recycling of plastic and for its integration into circular economy frameworks. Scientific research shows that certain microorganisms can degrade plastic, with more than 30,000 plastic-degrading enzymes identified in marine and terrestrial environments. This suggests an important role of marine biotechnology in policy frameworks. However, the rate of biodegradation is a gradual process, as plastics are relatively new to natural systems in evolutionary terms, and plastic-degrading enzymes are still not widespread.

Marine plastic debris serves as a substrate that supports microbial communities, leading to the formation of biofilms. These biofilms enable the degradation of plastic particles and present opportunities for engineering to enhance their degradation rates. Further research and intervention on these microbial communities could significantly enhance their overall biodegradation efficiency. Globally, companies such as Carbios are advancing enzymatic recycling methods to convert plastic into reusable materials on an industrial scale. In India, research institutions such as the Council of Scientific

and Industrial Research (CSIR) are working on microbial approaches for plastic degradation.

Marine biotechnology offers sustainable solutions for both marine plastic waste management and economic development through value addition.

Advancements in synthetic biology enable the development of microorganisms with improved plastic-degrading functions and the conversion of plastic into useful value-added products, such as chemicals or biofuels. In addition, marine biotechnology innovations enable the production of bio-based alternatives to plastics, such as seaweed-derived biodegradable polymers. These materials can help reduce plastic pollution, in addition to contributing to the growth of a sustainable blue economy. In India, companies such as SeaEnergy are working on marine-derived biomaterials which can replace conventional plastic to support the transition to a more sustainable and circular blue economy.

Despite its promise, scaling up remains challenging due to barriers to large-scale deployment, including slow degradation rates, ecological concerns about releasing engineered microorganisms into the natural marine environment, and high costs and regulatory ambiguity. Furthermore, biotechnology alone is insufficient to address the underlying issues of excess plastic production and combustion.

**The Way Forward**  
To address ocean pollution effectively using marine biotechnology approaches, comprehensive, integrated, and future-ori-

ented policy interventions are necessary.

Financial support for blue economy startups: Dedicated funding mechanisms, such as grants and public-private partnerships to scale up marine biotechnology interventions, and increased investments in emerging blue economy startups are essential. Globally, programmes such as Horizon Europe support bio-based and circular economy innovations, including alternative technologies for plastic degradation. In India, initiatives such as Startup India promote blue biotechnology ventures through targeted support such as incubation support and financial incentives.

Commercial deployment of marine biotechnology-based solutions requires an approach integrating innovation, environmental sustainability, and policy frameworks.

Strong regulatory and monitoring frameworks: Establishing clear regulatory guidelines is essential for the safe use and deployment of engineered plastic-degrading microbes. In addition, strong protocols for environmental risk assessments and intellectual property and technology transfer mechanisms are necessary. Marine biotechnology could be integrated within wider bioeconomy and ocean governance policies in India. At the global level, the European Chemical Agency is incorporating microplastics into the existing REACH regulation framework. In an Indian context, marine biotechnology initiatives for managing plastic pollution can be integrated into national ocean and bioeconomy policies under the Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change (MEFCC). The updated Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework focuses on improving traceability, digital tracking of marine plastic waste streams, and stringent compliance targets. Circular bioeconomy: Policy frameworks should encourage the conversion of plastic waste into high-value products, integrating marine biotechnology with recycling systems. At the global level, initiatives such as Parley for the Oceans focus on transforming marine plastic waste into novel materials. Oceanwaste supports the collection and recycling of ocean plastic waste for use in manufacturing. Another notable example is 4ocean, which integrates ocean plastic removal with the production of value-added, novel products. In India, the Blue Flag Programme advances sustainable plastic waste management and infrastructure. The Ministry of Earth Sciences supports research on marine and microplastic pollution and supports informed policy responses. Focused public awareness initiatives and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) investments in marine plastic management can help scale sustainable solutions.

Strong data and monitoring systems:

Robust data systems are necessary to monitor the flow of plastic pollution, identify hotspots, assess the effectiveness of marine biotechnology solutions, and enable evidence-based policymaking. For instance, the Global Partnership on Marine Litter facilitates the sharing and monitoring of data on marine litter. The Central Pollution Control Board in India has incorporated monitoring and data collection on marine plastic and microplastic leakage.

International collaboration: International cooperation and multilateral agreements, such as global plastic treaties, should include marine biotechnology-based solutions, improving cross-country collaborations and knowledge sharing and encouraging South-South cooperation to scale innovative solutions. The United Nations is negotiating the Global Plastics Treaty to introduce binding international commitments regarding plastic waste management. India's active involvement in regional initiatives such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association can help in the advancement of South-South partnerships in marine biotechnology innovations for plastic management.

It is essential to include local communities and their traditional knowledge of sustainable coast management in decision-making.

Local community and MSME participation: The engagement of local communities and medium and small coastal industries are essential for the scale-up and commercial deployment of marine biotechnology innovations. They should be integrated alongside waste management, processing and promoting community awareness. For instance, in Indonesia, community-based recycling initiatives have demonstrated effective plastic waste management at the local level using decentralised systems. Coastal livelihood programmes in India under the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana can be expanded to incorporate plastic waste management and circular economy-based business models.

Addressing marine plastic pollution requires transitioning from fragmented approaches towards a more coordinated, marine biotechnology and innovation-driven, circular economy-based policy approach. Scaling up of marine biotechnology-based interventions while ensuring environmental sustainability can enable innovative pathways for the advancement of the blue economy. However, achieving its full potential requires integrated policy support, targeted financial investments, and global collaboration. Going ahead, integrating these approaches into the national and international policy frameworks will be crucial for addressing marine plastic pollution and building resilient and sustainable marine ecosystems. (Courtesy: ORF)

## India's green heritage: Eco-villages, and the path to a sustainable future

By: T Senthil Siva Subramanian

Across India, eco-villages are rising as powerful models of sustainable, community-driven living. These are not utopian experiments - they are thriving settlements that integrate ancient wisdom with modern technology to create healthier, happier, and more resilient ways of life.

Auroville, Tamil Nadu, is perhaps India's most iconic eco-village - a universal township dedicated to sustainable living for over five decades. Born in 1960 as a visionary concept and championed by the Government of India, Auroville received a landmark unanimous resolution from UNESCO in 1966, recognising its international significance for the well-being of humanity. Today, it continues to pioneer models of conscious, ecological living that inspire communities worldwide.

Govardhan EcoVillage (GEV), Maharashtra, nestled in the Sahyadri mountains near Mumbai, has earned international recognition from the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO). Spanning 140 acres of lush green infrastructure, GEV seamlessly blends ancient Vedic knowledge with modern sustainable technologies. Visitors and residents alike benefit from organic farming, natural yoga practices, green-stay accommodations, and an Ayurvedic wellness centre rooted in Kerala's traditional healing traditions.

Khonoma, Nagaland holds the distinction of being Asia's first green village, driven entirely by the indigenous Angami tribe community. Famous for its sustainable jhum (shifting cultivation) agriculture, rich biodiversity, and community-led wildlife conservation, Khonoma demonstrates that indigenous knowledge and ecological stewardship go hand in hand.

Dayalbagh, Agra is a century-old green ecosystem, established in 1915, that has long embodied a holistic philosophy of life.

Dayalbagh follows a Six Sigma quality of life framework, built around three pillars: Quality, Values, and Attributes. Its carbon-free environment runs on solar power and battery-operated electric vehicles - entirely free of petrol and diesel. Community kitchens minimise waste, and affordable parabolic solar collectors are used for cooking. Dayalbagh

has pioneered Agri-Photovoltaic technology, integrating solar energy systems directly with agricultural land. It has also cultivated medicinal herbs such as *Abutilon indicum* (Kanghi) and *Acacia nilotica* (Babool) for use in its own pharmacy and Ayurvedic treatments.

The Dayalbagh Educational Institute (Deemed University) has established a Centre of Excellence in Mushroom Technology, offering modular courses that have driven large-scale adoption of button and oyster mushroom cultivation among small-scale farmers in the Agra region - a true model of community-based learning and rural empowerment.

Mawlynnong, Meghalaya, famously known as "God's Own Garden," is recognised as one of Asia's cleanest villages. Its remarkable cleanliness is sustained through disciplined waste segregation, traditional bamboo-based dustbins, and a strict zero-plastic policy - all managed entirely by community volunteers. It is a living proof that grassroots commitment can achieve what policy alone cannot.

Piplantri, Rajasthan has earned global recognition for a uniquely inspiring practice: planting 111 trees for every girl child born in the village. This movement has transformed Piplantri into a lush, thriving ecosystem while simultaneously celebrating the social value of women - a powerful union of environmental harmony and human dignity.

LEED Certification in India  
India's urban landscape is steadily transforming through the adoption of LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification - the internationally recognised green building rating system originally developed by the United States Green Building Council (USGBC). In India, LEED certification is validated by GBCI India (Green Business Certification Inc.), ensuring that buildings meet rigorous standards for energy efficiency, water recycling and harvesting, and waste management.

Landmark LEED-certified buildings across India include Suzlon One Earth in Pune, the CII-Sohrabji Godrej Green Business Centre in Hyderabad, and ITC Green Centre in Gurgaon - each a benchmark of sustainable design and responsible construction. A particularly remarkable Indian innovation comes from ANT

Studio, a pioneering architectural firm founded by Monish Siripurapu. The studio has developed a biomimicry-inspired passive cooling system using century-old Terracotta pot technology - a solution that is sustainable, affordable, and deeply rooted in India's artisanal heritage. This project, which beautifully represents the STEAM approach (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics), received funding from the European Union and recognition under the UN Environment Programme.

Renewables: Agri-Photovoltaics, Solar, and Wind

India is emerging as a global leader in renewable energy, with innovative solutions that protect both the environment and the livelihoods of farmers. Agri-Photovoltaic (Agri-PV) technology - which integrates solar panels directly over agricultural land - is being implemented across Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat. The Indian Agricultural Research Institute (ICAR) and the National Institute of Solar Energy, under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), have established a Centre of Excellence in Agri-PV to boost green productivity in rural areas. India has also made history by commissioning Asia's largest floating solar project at Omkareshwar in Khandwa District, Madhya Pradesh - a testament to the nation's bold renewable energy vision. On the wind energy front, the wind farm at Kayathar in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, operated under the National Institute of Wind Energy (NIWE), stands as a major national asset for clean, renewable power generation.

India's eco-villages, green buildings, and renewable energy initiatives collectively represent far more than environmental policy - they embody a philosophy of living in harmony with nature, drawing equally from ancient wisdom and modern innovation.

As India marches toward its goal of carbon neutrality by 2070 and its vision of a developed, self-reliant nation by 2047, these grassroots movements and technological milestones light the way. The health of our planet and the happiness of our people are inseparable - and India's green heritage proves, powerfully, that a sustainable future is not only possible, but already taking root. (Courtesy: The Pioneer)

## Conflict in the backyard: Community patrols cut crop damage in north Bengal, but south Bengal's farmers remain exposed

By: Javanta Basu

"Elephants entered our agricultural fields a few nights ago and completely damaged the harvest - potato, mustard and all. I am clueless how I will be able to run my family in the coming days," said Amar Mandal, name changed on request, a resident of Goswami village in Bankura district. A herd of elephants raided the area during the third week of January, eating a major part of the harvest and damaging the rest.

"Most farmers run on loans, and the impact of elephant raiding on the harvest is enormous. Bigha after bigha of land was lost and the government has not done anything effective to stop the elephants," the farmer said. He alleged that the compensation offered by the forest department was too low and often came too late.

Some months ago, a herd of around 12 elephants caused major damage in Sankrail block of Jhargram district, traditionally known as a hotspot of human-elephant conflict in southern West Bengal. Major parts of north Bengal have been equally affected.

West Bengal may have around 2 per cent of India's elephant population, but it is among the states with extremely high levels of human-elephant conflict, including agricultural loss. "Elephant-human conflict, particularly elephants raiding crops, has now become a common event in several south Bengal districts such as Jhargram, Paschim Medinipur, Bankura and Purulia," said Mukti Roy, an elephant expert and researcher at the Indian Institute of Science.

The situation is similar in the northern part of the state, where elephant raids have become a menace in several districts, including Jalpaiguri, Alipurdur and Darjeeling, particularly areas such as Kurseong, Baikunthapur, Dhupguri, tea gardens and places adjacent to the India-Nepal border.

Experts say, and the forest department agrees, that elephants have changed their food habits, shifting from grass to crops such as paddy and corn, which are more nutritious and easily available in agricultural fields.

"Though the damage in a few areas could be minimised through a range of actions, particularly the deployment of Quick Response Teams, or QRTs, to stop elephant influx into agricultural lands, still, in these areas, 40 per cent to 50 per cent of the harvesting zones suffer damage," said Anujit Basu, an elephant expert from the non-profit Nature and Wildlife Association, or NWA, which works in north Bengal.

Roy said the major crop damage had been near elephant corridors and river plains. He and several farmers said that, apart from elephants, wild boars also raid and damage farms, though elephants are responsible for the maximum damage.

State forest department officials agree that the problem of elephants affecting agricultural land has been serious and shows no sign of decline.

"With elephant numbers reaching around 800 in the state, and elephants showing signs of change in their food habits, preferring harvested crops, the problem is on the rise," said a senior forest official.

Numbers and compensation  
"In south Bengal, the number of elephants was 96 in 2005. This rose to 210 in 2025, with several from Jharkhand and Odisha choosing to stay back in Bengal permanently," said an expert.

"The number in north Bengal is now around 630, which has also doubled in the last two decades. With habitats shrinking and the number of elephants rising, the threat is rising every day," the expert said.

As a result, the forest department has to pay large amounts in compensation every year - around Rs 10 crore annually. "We spent around Rs 12.7 crore during 2023-24, Rs 10.17 crore during 2024-25 and Rs 6.15 crore during the ongoing financial year so far," a forest department official said.

"Though the amount includes compensation for human lives and hut damage, agricultural loss dominates the compensation amount," the official added.

In 2014-15, the forest department paid Rs 5.8 crore in elephant-related compensation, indicating that the amount has almost doubled within a decade.

The forest department said it has taken several measures to combat the problem. "We have formed an Elephant Movement Coordination Committee and monitor the animals daily, formed Rapid Response Teams, alerted people in affected areas through bulk SMSes, employed eight specially equipped vehicles called Airawat for the human-elephant impact zones, installed solar-powered fencing over 339km to stop wild animals entering vulnerable villages and strengthened the communication network," a senior official said. "While the forest department is undertaking a few steps, unless key decisions such as strengthening elephant habitats and stopping encroachment within elephant corridors are considered, it will be difficult to reduce human-elephant conflict, particularly the widespread damage of crops in the state," said a wildlife activist.

North Bengal model  
Community-driven initiatives, coupled with forest department efforts, are playing a key role in keeping elephant herds away from agricultural fields in parts of north Bengal. "In a few vulnerable areas, people of the community, with our help, have formed a Quick Response Team to monitor fields at night and stop elephants from damaging crops," said Basu.

He said coordinated action by community teams, using walkie-talkies that work within a range of 5 km to 7 km, is used to communicate the direction of moving herds.

Local farmers say the initiative has been successful so far.

Ganesh Ray, a farmer from Nagrakata block in Jalpaiguri district, cultivates paddy, mustard, jute and vegetables on 14 bighas of land. He said he faced elephant attacks a few years ago, but not anymore. "Since these QRTs have been operating, the damage has been curtailed by nearly 90 per cent or more. In fact, many who stopped cultivating because of the elephant menace have restarted farming," Ray said. He said earlier around 40 per cent to 45 per cent of the crop used to get damaged.

Alak Oraon from Kranti block in Jalpaiguri district agreed. "We have six bighas of forest-fringe land where we cultivate paddy and vegetables. Since the QRTs started operating, the damage from elephants has been reduced to one-tenth, though wild boars continue to be a problem," he said. "Being smaller in size, they often escape the monitoring," Ray said that, apart from intense monitoring, keeping elephant corridors free from encroachments also helped keep elephants away from habitation.

Biswajit Roy Choudhury from the non-profit NEWS, which works with the state forest department on elephants in north Bengal, said it was critical to plant grass varieties in forests that elephants prefer as fodder.

"We have found that in many elephant habitats and corridors, quick-growing exotic grass varieties were planted earlier, which elephants do not prefer as fodder because they have sharp edges," he said.

"We are experimenting by trying to replace those in a few areas with grasses such as *Imperata cylindrica*, locally called ulu grass, which are expected to be preferred by elephants. The initial results are encouraging," he added.

South Bengal struggles  
South Bengal, despite having fewer elephants, is struggling more than north Bengal to protect farmland from the animals.

Experts say there are several reasons. First, south Bengal's elephant habitat is not only small for around 200 elephants, but also fragmented and of poor quality, with less fodder. Second, in south Bengal, elephants venture into localities almost throughout the year. Unlike north Bengal, they always find food because most areas have harvests through the year.

In north Bengal, elephant incursions are mostly limited to mid-May to the end of July for corn, while paddy-linked movement ranges from mid-September to November. Occasionally, lone elephants raid houses during December and January.

# CID enters Mamata's Kalighat residence-cum-party office in 'forged signature' probe

**KOLKATA, June 9:** A CID team on Tuesday entered Trinamool Congress's central party office-residence of party supremo Mamata Banerjee in Kalighat area here, after a brief standoff with security personnel and a party leader, as a part of its probe into the controversy surrounding alleged forged signatures of TMC MLAs, which has triggered a split in the party.



Officials of the state investigating agency, accompanied by personnel from the Kalighat police station and a large contingent of women police personnel, arrived at the party's central office at 30B Harish Chatterjee Street around late afternoon, sources said.

The CID's move comes days after the agency served notices seeking information related to the alleged forging of signatures of TMC legislators on a proposal submitted to the Assembly Speaker for recognition of the Leader of Opposition.

According to CID officials present at the spot, the search was sought on the basis of a reply submitted by TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee to an earlier notice issued by the agency. "In his response, Abhishek Banerjee stated that signatures of MLAs were collected at the party's

central office at 30B Harish Chatterjee Street. Based on that statement, we have come here as part of the investigation," a CID officer said. Abhishek Banerjee, who is presently in New Delhi along with Mamata Banerjee, has been summoned by the CID to appear before it in the case by 5 pm on Tuesday.

As soon as the news spread, senior TMC leaders and MLAs Kunal Ghosh and Madan Mitra reached the residence of the party supremo but were not allowed to enter the premises. Later, TMC MP and advocate Kalyan Banerjee reached the spot and spoke to the CID officials.

The BJP and West Bengal Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari are trying

search in the absence of Abhishek Banerjee.

"We have not allowed the CID to enter the premises in the absence of Abhishek Banerjee. Once he comes, the CID can come and search the house," Chakraborty told reporters.

However, the situation changed later in the afternoon when the CID called in a larger police contingent and entered the premises despite what officials described as "mild resistance" from security personnel stationed there.

Senior officers from the Kalighat police station rushed to the spot and were seen arguing with the security staff, who are attached to the Kolkata Police.

The officers reportedly instructed them not to obstruct the search operation being carried out by the investigating agency.

Sources said the CID team subsequently entered the residence-cum-office complex and began its search and verification exercise.

In a related development, another CID team visited Abhishek Banerjee's office on Camac Street as part of the ongoing investigation.

The development marks a fresh twist in the forged signature case that has snowballed into the biggest internal crisis in the TMC's

28-year history.

The controversy erupted after a proposal sent to the Speaker seeking recognition of senior TMC MLA Sovandeb Chattopadhyay as Leader of Opposition allegedly contained forged signatures of several legislators. The allegations led to the registration of an FIR and a CID investigation.

The rebellion traces its immediate origins to the dispute over the selection of the Leader of Opposition after the Assembly elections.

The crisis escalated when 58 of the TMC's 80 MLAs defied the party leadership and backed expelled MLA Ritabrata Banerjee for the post instead of the party's official nominee, Sovandeb Chattopadhyay.

In a dramatic turn of events last week, the rebel camp wrested control of the legislature party, elected Ritabrata Banerjee as Leader of Opposition and secured recognition from the Assembly Speaker, resulting in the first split in the TMC since its formation in 1998.

The CID's simultaneous visits to the party's Kalighat headquarters and Abhishek Banerjee's office are being viewed as a significant escalation in the probe into the alleged forgery that lies at the heart of the political turmoil engulfing the ruling party. (PTI)

# CJI Surya Kant bats for mediation, says arbitration facing procedural hurdles



**NEW DELHI, June 9:** Observing that international arbitration is increasingly facing procedural hurdles, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said mediation is no longer an alternative but an essential instrument to achieve timely, amicable and lasting resolution of disputes.

He was delivering a lecture on "Mediation, Arbitration and Courts: Converging Trends in the Indian and English Approaches in Commercial Dispute Resolution" at the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom on Monday.

Calling for a fundamental shift in how global corporations and legal systems approach conflict, the CJI said, "The primary question for a modern corporation should no longer be where to litigate, but rather how to resolve."

He said courts, arbitration and mediation should not be viewed as competing mechanisms but as complementary institutions serving distinct functions within a broader justice ecosystem.

"We must reject the archaic narrative that pits alternative dispute resolution against the majesty of formal courts," he said.

"Traditional courts must continue to remain the ultimate guardians of public legal standard-setting and constitutional accountability. Yet, where the court provides the architecture of certainty, mediation serves as the adaptive mechanism for private commercial harmony. The two systems do not diminish one another; they sustain each other," he said.

At the outset, the CJI dealt with arbitration, especially international arbitration, as one of the important alternate dispute resolution mechanisms and referred to the difficulties being faced across jurisdictions in getting disputes resolved through this.

"It is my earnest belief that as international arbitration has increasingly mirrored the very procedural complexities it was designed to es-

cape, it is mediation that now emerges as the authentic frontier of commercial agility," he said.

"Over the last several decades, arbitration has indubitably come to be viewed across jurisdictions as a response to some of the perceived limitations of court-centric adjudication, particularly in matters involving speed, technical complexity, party autonomy, and cross-border commerce," he said.

Kant said that in India, the Arbitration and Conciliation Act came into being in 1996 and various judicial interpretations also advanced "a pro-arbitration approach", keeping in harmony with internationally accepted principles governing commercial dispute resolution.

Indian courts have repeatedly reaffirmed the principle of minimal judicial intervention for preserving the sanctity of arbitral proceedings, he said.

"However, in spite of its virtues, arbitration seems to be on the verge of inheriting some of the very procedural burdens from which it originally sought to depart. At least within the Indian justice delivery system, arbitral proceedings have generated an expanding parallel layer of litigation, where nearly every stage of the arbitral process becomes susceptible to judicial challenge between contesting parties," he said.

The CJI said arbitration proceedings get delayed due to questions on the very validity of the agreement, the appointment of arbitrators, the determination of the judicial seat, the distinction between seat and venue, issues of jurisdiction, and challenges to interim or final awards that frequently travel before courts at multiple stages.

"This, of course, is by no means a concern confined to the Indian judiciary alone. Jurisdictions across the world appear to be grappling with similar difficulties, whether in the context of domestic arbitration or complex cross-border commercial disputes," he said. (PTI)

# 3 killed, 5 injured after fire in factory in Jaipur

**JAIPUR, June 9:** Three persons were killed and five others injured after a fire broke out in a factory operated in a small house in Jaipur's Kho-Nagorian area on Tuesday, police said.

Locals claimed that it was a fire-cracker factory where labourers were working, while the police are conducting forensic examinations.

SMS Hospital superintendent Dr Mrinal Joshi said that three persons have died due to burn injuries.

Jaipur collector Sandesh Nayak visited the site and said that the fire was doused by fire brigades and the injured were taken to the hospital.

According to a local man, after hearing an explosion, people present nearby rushed to the house.

"We heard an explosion and rushed to the house. We managed to enter a portion of the house by throwing water and brought some persons out," he said.

Claiming that three of the rescued persons were burnt badly and probably had died before being rescued, he said two persons with burn injuries were lying and writhing on the road outside. They were rushed to hospital. (PTI)

# ₹ 6,800-cr Zojila tunnel project in J-K achieves breakthrough in excavation work

**DRASS/ MINIMARG, June 9:** The ₹ 6,800-crore Zojila tunnel, Asia's longest tunnel connecting the Kashmir Valley to Ladakh, on Tuesday achieved a significant breakthrough with a blast breaking through the last 2.5 metres of the 13-km high-altitude infrastructure project that cuts through the Himalayas.

Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari performed the breakthrough blasting of the main tunnel being constructed at an altitude of 11,578 feet above sea level, around 24 km from Sonamarg and 103 km from Srinagar.

Addressing the media, the minister said the project is a lifeline for the people of Leh, Ladakh and Jammu and Kashmir. It is at a height of 3,000 metres and workers have given their contribution by working in temperatures as low as minus four degrees.

He said 80 per cent of the workforce belongs to the region, and added that the project will provide all-weather connectivity to people of Ladakh region to Srinagar.

The breakthrough blasting of the



main tunnel was conducted at an equidistant of 6.5 km, providing access to East Portal (east side) to West Portal (west side). Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha and Chief Minister Omar Abdullah were also present on the occasion.

Officials of the National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) said the breakthrough is six months ahead of schedule.

As of now, about 85 per cent of the total work has been completed, Authority Engineer for the project, Yousef Es'haghpour Rahimabadi,

tdt PTI here. The tunnel is likely to be thrown open to the public in February 2028, the officials said, adding that after the breakthrough, the civil works will take another seven to eight months before the electrical works will begin. The tunnel, 9.5 metre wide, 7.57 metre high and 13.153 km long, is a horseshoe-shaped single-tube, a two-lane road tunnel built at the height of around 11,578 feet above sea level.

Abdullah appreciated the ministry for the Zojila tunnel project.

"People of Ladakh region saw this dream long ago. It (connectivity) has been their dream for long.

"But no one was able to fulfil this dream. People had to face a lot of problems with respect to education, tourism, medical treatment," he said, adding that the tunnel will improve the lives of people.

He also urged Gadkari to help in providing the region air connectivity as well in the future.

Once completed, the bi-directional tunnel will significantly improve access to Drass, Kargil and Leh, while enhancing civilian mobility, logistics and regional connectivity in this strategically important area.

In tunnelling, a breakthrough refers to the moment when teams involved in excavation work from both sides meet at a given point.

"The Zojila Tunnel is one of India's most challenging infrastructure projects taking shape in the heights of the Himalayas. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the guidance of Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways Nitin Gadkari, Indian engineers have turned the challenges into an opportunity," the Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways said. (PTI)

# Bihar CM Samrat Choudhary 'cheap' minister: Tejashwi



**PATNA, June 9:** RJD working president Tejashwi Yadav on Tuesday described CM Samrat Choudhary as a "cheap minister" for asking his mother Rabri Devi to vacate her government bungalow and downgrading the security cover of several of his family members.

Yadav, who is the leader of the opposition in the state assembly, fulminated against the BJP-led government when journalists approached him with queries, at the airport, about the controversies surrounding Rabri Devi's bungalow and the downgrade of security cover.

"Let me tell all of you that Samrat Choudhary is not the chief minister. He is a 'cheap' minister. His

diatribe about the bungalow and our security cover is a cheap tactics to divert public attention from the failings of his government, which is rocked by corruption scandals and plagued by empty coffers", alleged the young RJD leader.

He asked why the government is insisting on allotting the house occupied by Rabri Devi to a minister.

"She had been allotted the bungalow in her capacity as a former CM. Can that status change? And what is the fuss about a separate house having been allotted to me? I am the leader of the opposition. Is the ruling dispensation doing me a favour?" Yadav said.

Notably, the opposition party has been riled since the building construction department, on May 27, passed an order allotting 10, Circular Road, situated right across the street from the Chief Minister's residence, to BJP leader and minister Nand Kishor Ram.

The elderly former CM threw a fit upon learning about the order, saying she would not vacate the house and dared Choudhary, whom she keeps reminding that he had served in her cabinet, to "evict me

by force".

The government has stuck to its guns, pointing out that way back in November, Rabri Devi had been allotted the 39, Hardinge Road bungalow in her capacity as the leader of the opposition in the legislative council.

More recently, another order, passed by the state home department, downgraded the security cover of Rabri Devi and her husband Lalu Prasad, both of whom had been 'Z plus' protectees, and a number of other members of their family. Yadav did not say anything about reports in a section of the media that his mother has finally agreed to vacate her government bungalow and was likely to shift to a private mansion owned by the family within a week.

He, however, reacted to security personnel deployed at Rabri Devi's residence having been reportedly asked by her to go away, saying "we do not depend on the government for our own safety. I am proud of the loyalty and courage shown by our party workers who have been standing guard at her house". (PTI)

# India thanks Oman for rescuing 24 Indian crew from fire-stricken tanker

**NEW DELHI, June 9:** A Palau-flagged tanker that caught fire after it was attacked by the US Navy off the coast of Oman was black-listed and sanctioned by the US and its 24 crew Indian crew members were safely rescued.

The vessel, MT Marivex, made four attempts to evade the US blockade of Iranian ports, people familiar with the matter said. The vessel caught fire after it was hit by missile on Monday. External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the vessel was disabled off the coast of Oman.

"We also understand that there was some exchange of communication between the ship and the US Navy before the incident," he said.

"There were 24 crew members onboard the ship, all being Indian nationals. All of them have been rescued," he said. At a media briefing, Jaiswal said the Indian embassy in Oman coordinated with the Omani authorities in rescuing the Indian crew members.

"We thank the Oman government for their support in rescuing the crew and ensuring their safety. Our mission continues to be in touch with the seafarers," he said.

The vessel was black-listed and sanctioned by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), the financial intelligence and enforcement agency of the US Treasury Department, the people cited above said.

The OFAC acts against vessels involved in violating US sanctions on the sale of Iranian and Russian oil.

MT Marivex made four attempts to evade the US blockade of Iranian ports, the people said. On three occasions, the vessel turned away after repeated warnings by the US Navy, they said.

Separately, the Indian Coast Guard said the Maritime



Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Mumbai co-ordinated closely with Omani authorities in rescuing the Indian crew members following a "missile attack" on the tanker. At approximately 2:20 pm on Monday, MRCC received information regarding a missile attack on the Palau-flagged tanker while the vessel was anchored off Masirah, Oman, it said.

The information was relayed to MRCC by a relative of one of the crew members, it noted.

"Recognising the gravity of the situation and the immediate threat to the safety of the crew, MRCC Mumbai promptly established communication with the Oman Maritime Search and Rescue Centre (OMSC), and requested OMSC to assume the duties of Search Mission Coordinator (SMC) and render urgent assistance to the vessel and its crew," it said in a statement. (PTI)

# Lived reality helped shape this Odisha sarpanch's fight against menstrual taboos

**BHUBANESHWAR, June 9:** "Periods are not a curse or impurity. If women can give birth, why should they be stopped from entering a temple or kitchen during menstruation?"

Driven by this conviction and drawing from her own experience of undergoing traditional 'purification' rituals after her first period, Padmini Pradhan, the sarpanch of Harianta gram panchayat in Odisha's Cuttack district, is leading a campaign to break the taboos associated with menstruation among the rural communities.

Pradhan, 45, has been travelling across villages, speaking to adolescent girls, mothers and elderly women about menstrual hygiene, the safe use and disposal of sanitary pads, and the importance of creating "period-friendly" schools.

"In the villages, many girls still miss school during their period because the toilets are dirty, there is no water, or they just feel ashamed," she told PTI.

"We are trying to improve the toilets in schools and ensure that girls have access

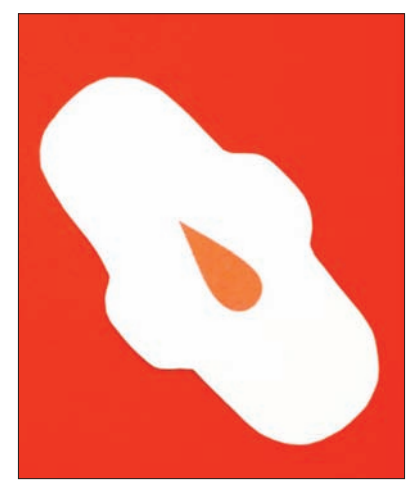
to the required facilities so that they continue attending classes confidently," she added.

According to a recent study, nearly 74 per cent of girls surveyed across Odisha reported missing school during menstruation, from one to eight days every cycle.

Jointly carried out by UNICEF, AIMS Bhubaneswar, IIT Bhubaneswar and a group of non-profits and local stakeholders, the survey found that pain and discomfort were cited as leading reasons for absenteeism, followed by lack of facilities, insufficient privacy and social stigma around menstruation.

"While we still have a long way to go, things are improving. Conversations around periods are slowly changing, especially among younger girls.

"When girls hear another woman speaking openly about menstrual health, it gives them confidence. Earlier, they used to hide pads inside bags or clothes. Now, some of them openly ask questions about menstrual hygiene," Pradhan said. It was her own experience with men-



struation that shaped Pradhan's determination to speak openly about the issue today.

"I got my first period when I was very young. I did not understand what was happening to me. I was so scared and embarrassed that I could not even tell any-

one in my family for three days," Pradhan recalled.

"At that time, there was no awareness and nobody discussed these things openly with their daughters," she said.

After her family eventually found out, Pradhan said she was made to undergo traditional purification rituals.

"I was bathed with a mixture of cow dung and water to make me 'pure' again. The clothes I had worn were sent to the 'dholi' for a thorough wash. All these practices reflected the deep stigma and misconceptions surrounding menstruation at the time," she stated.

Like many women in rural Odisha in the '80s and early '90s, Pradhan relied on cloth for years before switching to sanitary pads.

"I continued using cloth till 1993 because pads were either unavailable or considered unnecessary luxury items. Today's girls should not suffer the confusion and silence we faced," she emphasised.

According to UNICEF, lack of toilets, menstrual products and awareness affects

girls' attendance in schools and participation in community life.

One of Pradhan's key focus areas has been encouraging women to shift from old cloth pieces to sanitary pads to reduce the risk of infections.

"Earlier, many women used cloth without properly washing or drying it because of shame. I explain to them that sanitary pads are safe if used correctly and disposed properly," she said.

Pradhan also conducts awareness drives on menstrual waste disposal.

"We tell girls not to throw pads openly near ponds or roadsides. Proper disposal is important for hygiene and dignity," she said.

Studies and reports from Odisha show that menstrual taboos remain deeply rooted in several communities.

A UNFPA India report on Odisha documented practices where menstruating girls were barred from kitchens and temples, isolated in separate rooms and discouraged from bathing.

Another study published in the journal

BMC Women's Health noted that poor menstrual hygiene practices, social barriers and lack of access to products continue to affect women's health and dignity in the state. Noting that myths surrounding menstruation still persist in the villages, Pradhan said, "Women are told not to touch tulsi plants, not to cook food, not to enter temples and sometimes even to sleep separately.

"I want to ask people issuing such diktats, does menstruation make a woman impure? It is a natural biological process."

She also believes that menstrual awareness must involve men and boys.

"If fathers and brothers understand menstruation, girls will not feel ashamed. Awareness is the only solution," she said.

With the hope that the next generation of girls in rural Odisha will grow up without fear, stigma or embarrassment around periods. She said, "No girl should miss school or lose confidence because of menstruation. Periods are normal, not something dirty or secret," Pradhan said. (PTI)

# Manipur CM inaugurates NIA special court in Thoubal

**IMPHAL, June 9:** Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Monday inaugurated a National Investigation Agency (NIA) special court at Thoubal district, an official statement said.

Addressing the gathering, Singh said that the inauguration of the NIA special court, the first of its kind in the state, marks a significant milestone in strengthening the justice delivery system.

He expressed confidence that the establishment of the court would enhance the judicial framework and ensure timely access to justice for the people.

Referring to the present law and order challenges in the state, he noted that clients who previously



had to approach courts outside Manipur for filing NIA-related cases can now avail legal assistance within the state itself.

It would not only make the judi-

cial process more accessible but also reduce the financial burden and inconvenience faced by those seeking justice, the CM said.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief

Justice of the High Court of Manipur Justice M Sundar, stated that it was a matter of profound satisfaction to gather at the Thoubal District Court Complex to witness what he described as a significant milestone in the ongoing process of judicial institution building in Manipur.

He remarked that the establishment of the NIA special court should not be viewed in isolation, but rather as part of a larger narrative to strengthen the state's judicial infrastructure.

Later, Singh attended the inaugural function of the 'One-Day Seminar on Media for Communal Harmony and Responsible Journalism' at a hotel in Imphal. (PTI)

## Preparations for SIR of voter rolls begin in Arunachal, final list to be published on Sept 22: CEO



**ITANAGAR, June 9:** Arunachal Pradesh has begun preparations for the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, with house-to-house voter verification scheduled from June 15 and the final list to be published on September 22, a senior official said on Monday.

Addressing a press briefing here, Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) Pawan Kumar Sain said the revision exercise aims to ensure an accurate and updated electoral roll across the state.

As per the schedule, booth-level officers (BLOs) will conduct door-to-door verification and collect enumeration forms between June 15 and July 14. The draft electoral roll will be published on July 21, while the final list will be released on September 22 after disposal of claims and objections, Sain said.

Arunachal Pradesh currently has 8, 87,505 registered electors, including 4, 52,089 female voters and one registered under the transgender category, he said.

Sain said preparations for the re-

vision exercise are progressing steadily, with 50.23 per cent of the required enumeration forms already printed.

A total of 38 training sessions has also been conducted for BLOs and election officials to ensure smooth implementation of the exercise.

Five districts – West Kameng, West Siang, Upper Siang, Leparada and Shi Yomi have achieved 100 per cent printing of enumeration forms, making those the first districts in the state to complete the task, he said.

Highlighting the participation of political parties in the revision process, Sain said 3,131 booth-level agents (BLAs) have been appointed so far, including 2,286 by the BJP, 422 by the Congress, 239 by the People's Party of Arunachal and 100 by the National People's Party.

The SIR is aimed at updating electoral rolls by enrolling eligible citizens, removing duplicate or ineligible entries and correcting voter details wherever necessary, officials said. (PTI)

## Ziro Valley pedals for a greener future

HT Bureau

**ZIRO, June 9:** Celebrating World Bicycle Day 2026, the breathtaking landscape of Ziro Valley came alive during the Apatani Heritage Village Ride, beautifully organised by the Lower Subansiri Cycling Association (LSCA) under the Arunachal Cycling Association (ACA). Pedaling under the theme "Pedal Towards a Healthier and Greener Future," over fifty enthusiastic cyclists came together to champion health, environmental sustainability and community spirit.

The event was infused with youthful energy as 16 students from the Hill Queen Education Institute rode alongside their Principal, Rubu Lalayang and a supportive group of local leaders, including ZPM Leegang Tatang. Concluding the inspiring journey, LSCA president Tage Opo and secretary Narang Pullo expressed their heartfelt gratitude to the valley, emphasising that cycling is rapidly evolving from a recreational pastime into a celebrated competitive sport and a daily commitment to protecting the planet.

The event marked a powerful step forward in building a lasting, eco-conscious culture in the region.

## Confident of expanding NPP footprint beyond northeast: Party chief Conrad Sangma



**SHILLONG, June 9:** National People's Party president and Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K Sangma on Tuesday exuded confidence about his party's footprint beyond the northeast, citing growing support from across the country.

Addressing the party's National Committee Meeting and Annual General Meeting, he said the increasing engagement from different states reflected growing public confidence in the NPP and its governance model.

"The rising engagement from states across India shows the growing trust people have in the NPP. We are confident of expanding our footprint beyond the northeast in the years ahead," he said.

The meeting was attended by party leaders, office-bearers and representatives from across the northeast and more than 14 states, who deliberated on organisational strengthening, electoral preparedness and the party's long-term vision for the region.

Sangma said discussions focused on promoting

youth and women leadership, safeguarding indigenous rights and advancing inclusive and sustainable development under the party's vision of "Northeast 2047: Gateway to Prosperity".

"Leaders, office-bearers and representatives from across the northeast and more than 14 states, came together with a shared vision for our people and nation," he said in a social media post after chairing the meeting. The chief minister said the northeastern region was poised to play a pivotal role in India's future growth and development.

"The northeast is central to India's future and through collective effort, stronger inter-state collaboration and people-centric governance, we remain committed to building a stronger more inclusive and prosperous region," he said.

The party also reviewed its organisational growth and preparations for upcoming elections while reaffirming its commitment to expanding its presence across the country.

"We also reviewed our organisational growth, electoral preparedness and reaffirmed our commitment to expanding the party's footprint while staying true to our motto, 'One Voice, One Northeast'," Sangma said.

During the annual general meeting, the NPP adopted resolutions aimed at strengthening democratic governance, promoting peace and harmony in the northeast, protecting indigenous rights and accelerating inclusive development across the region.

The party also reiterated its commitment to strengthening youth and women leadership, fostering sustainable growth and enhancing cooperation among northeastern states. (PTI)

## Arunachal: BJP candidate's Rajya Sabha poll nomination papers found valid

**ITANAGAR, June 9:** The nomination papers of BJP candidate Tai Tagak for the lone Rajya Sabha seat from Arunachal Pradesh were scrutinised and found to be valid on Tuesday, officials said.

The scrutiny of nomination papers was conducted at Nokmey Namati Hall of the legislative assembly secretariat here.

Tagak had filed his nomination for the Rajya Sabha seat on Monday. The polls will be held on June 18.

The election to the Rajya Sabha seat was necessitated as the term of incumbent MP Nabam Rebia is scheduled to end on June 23.

With the BJP enjoying a comfortable majority in the 60-member House, Tagak's election to the Upper House of Parliament is widely expected to be a formality.

The BJP currently has 46 legislators in the assembly, while the People's Party of Arunachal (PPA) has six members.

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) has three MLAs, while the Congress and National People's Party (NPP) have one member each. Three legislators are Independents. (PTI)

## 14 Kuki hostages released after month of abduction in Manipur's Senapati

**IMPHAL, June 9:** Nearly a month after 14 Kuki individuals were abducted by armed groups in Manipur's Senapati district, all the hostages were released on Tuesday, an official said. The release of the 14, who were abducted on May 13 following the killing of three church leaders in an ambush in Kangpokpi district was facilitated by the United Naga Council (UNC), the apex body of the Naga community in Manipur and other Senapati district-based civil society organisations. "All of them were released safe and sound at the Senapati district headquarters in the presence of police and security forces," the official said. UNC president Ng Lorho said the hostages were set free following appeals by the central and state governments, church bodies and apex tribal organisation. (PTI)

## Sikkim Education dept launches skill development programme for administrative staff

**GANGTOK, June 9:** To strengthen administrative efficiency and professional competence, the Sikkim government's Education department has launched a year-long skill development programme for its ad hoc administrative staff across the state, an official statement said on Monday.

It said that the programme, titled 'Intensive Intentional Learning' (IIL) has been conceptualised by the Students Welfare Board under the leadership of chairperson Sonam Chopel, along with board members Kunzang Choeki, Dr S Mukhia and Naresh Chhetri.

Officials said the initiative seeks to equip young employees with practical workplace and digital skills required in a rapidly evolving administrative environment.

Unlike conventional training workshops, the programme will run throughout the year and focus on hands-on learning through live demonstrations, peer-to-peer engagement, guided practice and real-time office assignments, it said.

The statement further said that the training will be conducted by the Sikkim Professional Management Forum (SPMF), which has experience in conducting skill development and digital literacy programmes for young learners and professionals.

According to the statement, participants will receive training in office documentation, communication, file management, workplace efficiency, Microsoft Office applications, Google Workspace tools and emerging artificial intelligence platforms increasingly being adopted in modern workplaces.

It said that the initiative has received support from Chief Secretary R Telang and Education Secretary Tashi Chopel, who have backed the programme as part of broader efforts to strengthen institutional capacity within the department.

The statement said the programme could serve as a model for other government departments seeking to enhance workforce productivity through continuous learning and professional development.

Beyond improving day-to-day office functioning, the initiative is also expected to prepare young administrative personnel for future opportunities, including fellowships, higher studies, leadership positions and specialised professional roles, it said.

The statement said that the programme reflects a growing emphasis on investing in human resources as a key component of governance reforms, with the long-term goal of building a more efficient, digitally skilled and responsive administration in Sikkim. (PTI)

## Manipur DGP appeals to people to cooperate with police in maintaining law and order

**IMPHAL, June 9:** Manipur DGP Mukesh Singh has appealed to people to cooperate with the police in maintaining law and order and ensuring a safe and secure environment for all.

Singh made the remarks at an interaction with Kuki and Naga civil society organisation during his maiden visit to Kangpokpi and Senapati districts on Sunday.

The DGP was briefed on the prevailing law and order situation, security measures and key achievements of the police.

"He also reviewed the overall functioning and operational preparedness of the district police forces," officials said.

Singh also held interactions with senior officials of the district administration and commanders of the Central Armed Police Forces.

"My instruction to police personnel is to deal with every case in an impartial manner. Any violation of law will be dealt with in a serious manner," Singh later told reporters on Sunday evening.

He reiterated that the police will continue to serve the people impartially, without fear or favour.

The DGP's visit to Kangpokpi and Senapati came amid tension between the Naga and Kuki communities over suspected armed groups allegedly taking hostage at least 20 people, with efforts underway to secure their release.

Manipur witnessed the killing of at least 260 people and the displacement of thousands in violence between the Meitei and Kuki communities since May 2023. (PTI)

## Army conducts weapon and equipment display for NCC cadets at NERIST

HT Correspondent

**NIRJUL, June 9:** The Gajraj Corps of the Indian Army conducted a motivational lecture and weapon and equipment display for NCC cadets during the Combined Annual Training Camp of 1 Arunachal Pradesh Battalion NCC at the North Eastern Regional Institute of Science and Technology (NERIST), Nirjuli.

The programme, organised by an infantry unit of the Army in the presence of the Commanding Officer and Administrative Officer of 1 APBN NCC, witnessed enthusiastic participation from more than 350 NCC cadets and students from various educational institutions.

The display was aimed at providing participants with an insight into modern military weapons, surveillance systems and equipment employed by the Indian Armed Forces, including several indige-

nous platforms.

Among the weapons showcased were the SIG Sauer 716 Rifle, Negev 7.62 mm Light Machine Gun (LMG), SAKO TRG-42 Sniper Rifle, 84 mm Recoilless Launcher Mk-IV, 40 mm Multi Grenade Launcher (MGL), MP9 submachine gun and the AK-203 Assault Rifle.

The equipment display featured the Uncooled Hand-Held Thermal Imager (HHTI), Thermal Imaging Sight, Reflex Sight, Spotter Scope and Holographic Sight, providing cadets with an understanding of the technologies used for surveillance, observation and target acquisition in modern military operations.

The event also offered students an opportunity to interact directly with soldiers serving on the country's frontlines, helping foster a sense of patriotism, discipline and national responsibility.

The programme was attended by Capt Achyut Sarkar of NIT Jote, Associate NCC Officers (ANOs) and Caretaker Officers (CTOs) from various educational institutions, including GHSS Naharlagun, MTGHSS Itanagar, KV No 2 Itanagar and NERIST, along with PI Staff of 1 AP BN NCC.

Army officials said the initiative was aimed at motivating the youth by highlighting the role of the Armed Forces in safeguarding the nation and encouraging cadets to become responsible citizens and future leaders.

The programme concluded with an interactive session during which participants gained valuable insights into the capabilities of modern military equipment and the professionalism, dedication and commitment of the Indian Armed Forces.

## Shaurya Chakra awards to two Manipur natives brought immense pride: CM

**IMPHAL, June 9:** Manipur Chief Minister Y Khemchand Singh on Tuesday said conferring the Shaurya Chakra on two defence personnel from the state brought immense pride to the people. His remarks came after Major Leishangthem Deepak Singh of 11 Para (Special Forces) and Rifleman Manglem Sang Vaiphei of 3 Assam Rifles, both from Manipur were awarded the Shaurya Chakra on Monday for displaying raw courage, unparalleled bravery and total disregard for personal safety in the line of duty.

President Droupadi Murmu conferred seven Kirti Chakras, 15 Vir Chakras, and 29 Shaurya Chakras to the personnel of the defence forces, Central Armed Police Forces and state or Union Territory police forces. The Shaurya Chakra is India's third-highest peacetime gallantry award.

Extending congratulations to Leishangthem, Singh in a social media post, said, "His courage, professionalism and unwavering dedication to duty bring immense pride to Manipur and serve as an inspiration to generations of young Indians."

The CM saluted Leishangthem's valour and commitment to

the nation.

He also extended congratulations to Vaiphei for "his exceptional courage, tactical acumen and distinguished service during a counter-infiltration operation".

Vaiphei hails from the Churachandpur district.

In another post, Singh said, "His (Vaiphei) gallantry and dedication to the nation bring immense pride to Manipur and inspire our youth to serve with honour, commitment and patriotism."

BJP state president Adhikarimayum Sharda Devi, on behalf of the party, said the two brave sons of Manipur have displayed "extraordinary courage, unwavering dedication to duty and selfless service to the nation". "Their acts of gallantry in the face of grave danger embody the highest traditions of valour, sacrifice and patriotism," she said.

"The people of Manipur take immense pride in their remarkable achievements and salute their steadfast commitment to protecting innocent lives and safeguarding the sovereignty and security of our nation," she added. (PTI)

## Tripura govt intervention prevented 9,000 child marriages in state: Minister

**AGARTALA, June 9:** Tripura Social Welfare and Social Education Minister Tinku Roy on Tuesday said administrative interventions have successfully prevented over 9,000 child marriages across the state in the last financial year.

States such as Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Telangana, Tripura and West Bengal have a higher prevalence of child marriage than the national average.

"The cases of prevention of child marriage have been increasing with every passing year due to well-coordinated efforts by all the stakeholders, including district administration, police and gram panchayats," he said at a press conference here.

"During 2025-26, as many as 9,982 child marriages were prevented by all stakeholders in the state, although we do not have exact data on child marriages that actually occurred," he said.

Exuding confidence in curbing the menace, Roy said child marriage remains a concern in subdivisions such as Sonamura in Sepahijala district and Kailasha-



har in Nakotki district.

"The Child Welfare Committees, several non-government organisations and the Tripura Child Rights Commission are also working to curb child marriage as much as possible," he said.

Roy said electricity connections have been provided to over 3,000 Anganwadi centres out of around 10,000 Anganwadi centres, while the remaining will get the

facility during the current fiscal year.

The minister added that around 100 Anganwadi centres offering Bengali-medium learning materials have been converted into English medium following requests from guardians.

"This move will help children of Anganwadi centres to get admission into Vidyajyoti Schools (CBSE) without any language problem," he added. (PTI)

No. KED/NIT-66/2026-27/1172

Dated Kokrajhar, the 9<sup>th</sup> June/2026

### DETAILS TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tender in prescribed form affixing non-refundable court fee stamp of Rs. 8.25 (Rupees Eight paise twenty five) only subsequently to be drawn up in printed "F-2" form with validity period of '90 (Ninety)' days from the date of receipt of tenders are invited from the Registered Class-I (A, B, C) & Class-II P.W.D. Electrical Contractor under P.W.D., Guwahati Electrical Circle, Guwahati-1 and the Registered Class-III P.W.D., Kokrajhar Electrical Division of 2020-27 and having valid Electrical Contractor licence for the following electrical works and will be received in the Office of the undersigned up to 2.00 P.M. of 17/06/2026 and will be opened at 3.00 P.M. of the same date. The Contractors or their authorized agents may be present at the time of opening tender.

Sl. No.	Name of Work	Approx. Estimated Value	Time of Completion	Earnest Money
1	Installation of CCTV Surveillance System Judicial Court, Goalpara	Rs. 40,78,043.00	90 (Ninety days)	General 2% (Two) P.C. of tender value (1% of Tender value in case of OBC/SC/ST)

Tender forms can be had from the Office of the undersigned and Executive Engineer, P.W.D., Kokrajhar Electrical Division, Kokrajhar during working hours and up to 2.00 P.M. 16/06/2026 on application mentioned registration No. etc. on payment of Rs. 1,500.00 (Rupees Fifteen thousand) only per set by Indian crossed postal order / Bank Draft / Banker Cheque payable to the Executive Engineer, P.W.D. Kokrajhar Electrical Division, Kokrajhar.

Sd/-

Executive Engineer, P.W.D.,  
Kokrajhar Electrical Division, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)/C/2026-27/490

# Hardik, Rohit get all-clear for ODI return from CoE



**MULLANPUR, June 9:** Star all-rounder Hardik Pandya and senior batter Rohit Sharma have been cleared by the Sports Science team of BCCI's Centre of Excellence to participate in the upcoming three-match ODI series against Afghanistan starting on Sunday in Dharamsala.

Both Pandya and Rohit missed quite a few IPL matches for Mumbai Indians due to their respective issues. While Pandya was battling back spasms, Rohit had a hamstring niggle. Hardik has been at the CoE in Bengaluru since June 2.

"Hardik was on a holiday abroad before he checked in at the CoE on June 2. Over the next five days, he did several match simulations and even bowled (full quota of) 10 overs," a BCCI source told PTI.

"There has been no discomfort and the information is that his fitness data for various parameters has been okayed by Strength and Conditioning coaches at the CoE," the source added. Former skipper Rohit was also at the

CoE to assess his hamstring niggle and he too has been given the go ahead after an examination.

On Monday, India's assistant coach Sitanshu Kotak had said that although he doesn't have an update on Pandya's fitness status, he believed the all-rounder was doing fine.

Pandya is an important cog in India's white ball set up given the balance he lends to the side with his pace bowling and lusty hits during the death overs.

The most relieving aspect is that Pandya is bowling 10 overs in training session which means that he is ready for the rigours of 50-over cricket.

It is, however, not clear whether Pandya will join with the team in Chandigarh for a training session under lights or directly link up in Dharamsala which was the original plan.

Star batter Virat Kohli is already missing the series owing to a hamstring injury. Apart from Dharamsala, the rubber features games in Lucknow and Chennai on June 17 and June 20 respectively. (PTI)

## We've crossed the line once and can do it again: Jemimah

**NEW DELHI, June 9:** India are not lacking in self-belief after their historic women's ODI World Cup triumph last year and they are the "favourites" to win the upcoming T20 World Cup in England, says star batter Jemimah Rodrigues.

The women's T20 World Cup begins on June 12, and India play their first match on Sunday against Pakistan in Birmingham. New Zealand are the defending champions while South Africa ended as runners-up in the last edition in 2024.

India are placed in the six-team Group A along with Australia, South Africa, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Netherlands. Two teams from the group will qualify for the semifinals.

"Everyone was a part of it (the ODI World Cup win); they know what pressure feels like and, at the same time, everyone knows that we've crossed the line once and can do it again. That belief rubs off," Jemimah said on JioStar's 'Champions Huddle'.

"But when you win one, you don't want to stop there. You want to make it two, three, however many you can. Our fans make us feel at home wherever we go. So, yes, we are the favourites, no doubt about that."

The 25-year-old Jemimah was one of the stars of India's maiden ODI World Cup triumph in 2025 at home.

"Many times, we visualise success so much, but now we've actually lived it. That helps us believe even more that we can do it again. It's great to have so many members from the 2025 World Cup squad in this team, along with a few more youngsters coming in. I think the energy will rub off on them. Everyone is going to share their experiences," she said.

India captain Harmanpreet Kaur said the ODI World Cup win has boosted the team's confidence of bagging more global events.

"Yeah, 100 per cent. I think everybody will agree with me that life has completely changed after winning our first ODI World Cup. Hopefully, we'll continue this run of winning trophies."

"This is what I want as a captain, and I think it's what everyone in our team has been dreaming of. Hopefully, we'll continue moving in this direction."

India head coach Amol Muzumdar said his team wants to make winning a habit. (PTI)

## Women's T20 WC: The Challengers and Hopefuls



**BENGALURU, June 9:** Will India complete a historic double? Can Australia regain lost ground? Will this be eternal bridesmaid South Africa's turn to stand under the spotlight? Or will an underdog script a thrilling triumph?

The 10th edition of the ICC Women's T20 World Cup, starting on June 12 in England, offers several exciting possibilities and PTI takes a look at the contenders and challengers.

**India**  
After winning the ODI World Cup last year, India will be eager to bag the T20 version to complete a grand double, something only Australia has managed to achieve. The Harmanpreet Kaur-led side has the wherewithal to do it, evidenced by their series wins at home against Sri Lanka and Australia in the last six months.

But India faltered against South Africa (4-1) and England (2-1) away, and they will also miss the wily pace all-rounder Amanjot Kaur, who could have been a key operator in English conditions.

The Women in Blue will hope that the batters will find their groove from the outset, and the pace trio of Renuka Singh, Arundhati Reddy and Kranti Goud can come up with incisive spells.

Some of the leading players such as Smriti Mandhana, Jemimah Rodrigues, Harmanpreet, Deepti Sharma, and Richa Ghosh have played in the Hundred and Kia Super League, and that experience will come handy.

**Australia**  
The six-time winners have a new skipper in Sophie Molineux after Alyssa Healy called it a day.

But Australia's real strength is in their familiar, proven core -- Elysse Perry, Tahlia McGrath, Ashleigh Gardner, Megan Schutt, Alana King, and Beth Mooney.

The addition of prolific opener Georgia Voll and left-arm pacer Lucy Hamilton has further strengthened their squad.

The Aussies are entering an ICC event without a trophy in their kitty for the first time since 2017, and they will certainly want to correct that anomaly.

**New Zealand**  
The title holders are coming with a squad that has experience and youth in the right mix, and could be a tough bunch to beat.

Their hopes will revolve mainly around Sophie Devine, Suzie Bates and Lea Tahuhu and the Kiwis want to win the title

for them as the troika will move away after this showpiece.

However, all-rounder Amelia Kerr will be a key factor in New Zealand's run as she has been in wonderful touch of late with the bat. She was the player of the final and tournament in 2024.

Her reputation and skill-set have only gone up in the last two years.

**England**  
The home side will be eagerly monitoring the fitness of regular skipper Nat Sciver-Brunt, who missed the recent series against India. She is expected to be fit for the tournament.

But England, led by Charlie Dean, proved in that series that they can win without Sciver-Brunt, coming back from a 0-1 deficit to register a 2-1 victory.

They also have very handy players in Alice Capsey, Sophie Ecclestone, Linsey Smith, Freya Kemp and veterans Heather Knight and Danni Wyatt-Hodge.

**South Africa**  
In their effort to land a maiden title, South Africa have brought in experienced pacer Shabnim Ismail, but their real strength lies in flexible players like Nadine de Klerk, Sune Luus, Chloe Tryon, Dane van Niekerk, who can land a heavy punch at any stage of the game.

Led by a composed Laura Wolvaardt, South Africa also have a capable bowling unit in Marizanne Kapp, Ayabonga Khaka and Annerie Dercksen.

They are in the same group as India and Australia, and that makes it mandatory for them to always be on their guard to progress to the semifinals.

**The Darkhorse: Sri Lanka**  
The Islanders are the form side coming into this World Cup, winning five away matches against Bangladesh and the West Indies.

The most obvious star in their team is skipper Chamari Athapaththu, who will have to play a huge role with the bat in the tournament.

But over the last couple of years, the Lankans have managed to reduce the dependence on their talisman, having unearthed talents like Hasini Perera, Vishmi Gunarathne, Harshitha Samarawickrama, Nilakshika Silva and Kaveesha Dilhari.

But they don't have a pace attack to bank upon, and spinners will be expected to stifle the opposition. The impact that slow bowlers can make in England is debatable.

It could be their Achilles Heel in the event. (PTI)

## Former Australian captain Michael Clarke meets Haryana CM



**CHANDIGARH, June 9:** Former Australian cricketer Michael Clarke met Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini at his official residence here and discussed cricket development, youth talent and opportunities for greater sporting engagement between India and Australia.

After meeting the CM on Monday evening, Clarke emphasised the importance of sporting ties between the two countries and said India and Australia share a strong relationship that can be further strengthened through sports and people-to-people exchanges.

"Haryana has produced some outstanding athletes, and there is no shortage of sporting talent here. I believe the state has the potential to produce many more quality cricketers in the years to come," a Haryana government statement quoted the former Australian captain as saying. Clarke also expressed his desire to spend more time in Haryana and contribute to the development of young cricketers.

According to the statement, Clarke said he would be keen to explore the possibility of establishing a cricket academy in the state in the future.

"I have been bringing young Australian players to India and would also like to create opportunities for young Indian players to visit Australia. Such exchanges can help young cricketers learn from different environments and gain valuable international exposure," he added.

During the meeting, the chief minister and Clarke also played cricket. On the lawns of the CM's residence here, Saini tried his hand at batting and hit one lofty shot while Clarke bowled. Clarke captained Australia in Tests and ODIs between 2011 and 2015.

The 45-year-old was in Chandigarh to commentate on the India-Afghanistan Test match in Mullanpur, Punjab.

India outplayed Afghanistan by an innings and 300 runs on the third day of the one-off Test in Mullanpur on Monday.

As per the statement, Clarke said it was a pleasure to meet the chief minister and lauded his passion for the game.

"It was great meeting the chief minister. His love and passion for cricket is commendable. I bowled a ball to him and he hit it for a six," Clarke said. Welcoming Clarke, Saini said Haryana remains committed to strengthening its sporting ecosystem and providing young athletes with opportunities to excel at the highest level. (PTI)

## Zverev's French Open triumph receives muted reception in France due to off-court issues

**PARIS, June 9:** Alexander Zverev's victory at the French Open did not dominate the headlines in France on Monday as is normally expected for the men's singles champion.

Most noticeably, his win was reduced to a minor mention on the front page of sports daily L'Equipe, the country's main sports newspaper, which published an editorial highlighting accusations of domestic violence that the German player has faced.

Zverev won his first major title on Sunday in Paris when he defeated Flavio Cobolli in five sets. L'Equipe instead dedicated its front page to the handball team of Metz, which became the first French club to lift the Champions League women's trophy. There was just a small picture of Zverev on the top left corner of the main page, with the headline "Zverev, major at last."

In addition to its coverage of the final, L'Equipe published an op-ed headlined "To live with" that focused on past accusations against Zverev. Two years ago, he settled a domestic abuse case after reaching an out-of-court settlement with his former partner, who accused him of assaulting her.



A district court in Berlin ended the trial after an agreement between state prosecutors and lawyers for Zverev and his former partner Brenda Patea. Zverev agreed to pay fines of 150,000 euros (\$162,000) to the state and 50,000 euros (\$54,000) to charitable organizations.

Zverev previously denied an assault allegation made by another woman. Those accusations were investigated by the ATP, but it said in January 2023 that there was insufficient evidence.

"The context complicates the reception of his success," L'Equipe wrote. "Under German law, the payment of this sum does not constitute an admission of guilt. The proceedings concluded without any entry on his criminal record. He remains presumed innocent in a case that the courts will no longer

adjudicate. Everyone will have to live with that. Her, him, you, us."

The newspaper told the Associated Press that the decision not to feature Zverev as its main front page headline was primarily linked to the abundance of major sporting events over the weekend, including Formula 1's Monaco Grand Prix and the latest developments in cycling ahead of the Tour de France, as well as the fact that a French club won the handball European Cup.

Later, L'Equipe said Zverev interrupted when it was put to him during an interview on Monday that the subject of the accusations had been a subject of media discussion.

Zverev reportedly responded by saying: "Wait, first of all, it isn't that kind of interview. Secondly, you know it has been proven that the accusations were false?" (AP)

## Ridhima looks to continue dominance as 7th leg of Hero WPGT tees off in Mysuru

**MYSURU, June 9:** Ridhima Dilawari, who won three of the six events in the 2026 Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour, will look to continue her dominance as the seventh leg gets underway here.

The tournament at the Jayachamaraj Wadiyar Golf Course heralds the start of the second half of the 2026 domestic season. The Par-70 course will play to just under 6000 yards.

Ridhima won the second, fourth and sixth legs of the Tour and holds a sizeable lead over the field on the Hero Order of Merit standings.

Of the remaining three events, Jasmine Shekar, Tvesa Malik and amateur Lavanya Gupta won once each. This week Jasmine and Lavanya are not participating.

Ridhima's best season was in 2019, when she won five times in 12 starts and was second behind Gaurika Bishnoi in the Order of Merit.

She won only once in 2025, but has been in great form as she divides her time between the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour, the AM Green IGPL Tour and the Ladies European Tour, where she is hoping to get a few starts.

Ridhima will be up against Vani Kapoor, one of the most successful players ever on the Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour. Vani, the 2025 Hero Order of Merit winner with five wins, is looking to get her first win of 2026 after having played only three of the first six events this year.

The experienced Amandeep Drall, Tvesa

Malik, the Hero supported player, Neha Tripathi, a resurgent Jahanvi Bakshi, Shweta Mansingh, Durga Nitur, Anvitha Narendar, Sneha Singh and Khushi Khanijau too will be hoping to make a mark.

The strong field includes promising young professionals like Mannat Brar, Vidhatri Urs, Heena Kang and others.

The field includes 11 amateurs, headlined by the US-bound Zara Anand, Ananya Sood, Alysha Dutt and Ceerat Kang.

In the first round, Ridhima has been grouped with Eti Chaudhary and Khushi Khanijau, while Vani plays alongside Vrinda Yadav and amateur Nainika V Kumar. (PTI)

## WC ref from Somalia who was denied entry to the US was about to make history for his country

**MOGADISHU (SOMALIA), June 9:** The World Cup referee from Somalia who was denied entry to the United States after arriving in Miami and subsequently dropped from the tournament by FIFA was set to make history for his country.

Omar Artan was due to be the first referee from Somalia to officiate at the World Cup after making FIFA's final list for the tournament, which was announced two months ago. He is one of Africa's top referees and was named the continent's best male referee in 2025 by the African soccer body.

He was denied entry at Miami International Airport on Saturday over "vetting concerns," U.S. Customs and Border Protection said in a statement without giving details of those concerns. Artan was issued a visa to travel to the U.S. last week, according to the Somalia Embassy in Kenya that processed it.

The move to deny a FIFA-appointed match official permission to enter the World Cup is highly unusual. Artan was due to meet up with other World Cup referees at their training base in Miami.

The Somalia Sports and Youth Ministry said on Tuesday that it had not been told why Artan was denied entry and its embassy in the U.S. was making diplomatic efforts to resolve the problem and still allow Artan to referee at the World Cup, which opens on Thursday.

Somalia was one of the countries sub-



jected to new travel restrictions last year under the Trump administration's crackdown on immigration. That raised concerns that fans, players and officials from those countries — most of which are African — might be denied entry for the World Cup due to the larger crackdown despite having valid visas.

Artan subjected to additional inspection

"During processing, the traveler underwent additional inspection, a routine part of CBP's inspection process when officers need to verify information or determine admissibility," CBP said in its statement on Monday. "Following inspection, the traveler, a referee for the FIFA World Cup, was determined to be inadmissible due to vetting concerns and was denied entry."

It didn't name Artan and referred only to a Somali national who is a World Cup referee. Artan is the only Somali referee selected for the tournament.

CBP said all travelers seeking entry into the U.S. — including World Cup players, coaches and staff — were subject to CBP inspection and vetting.

"Admissibility determinations are made on a case-by-case basis using law enforcement, national security, and immigration information available at the time of inspection," the CBP statement said. "CBP officers have the authority to question travelers, conduct inspections, and determine admissibility consistent with U.S. law."

**FIFA drops ref from World Cup**  
FIFA said it was not involved in the immigration processes and was informed by U.S. authorities that Artan's "status will not be changed at present." It said Artan wouldn't be able to train and officiate at the World Cup.

"In line with previous FIFA events, a host government ultimately determines who receives a visa and who is admitted into their country," FIFA said.

Still, FIFA and its president Gianni Infantino built close ties to U.S. President Donald Trump's government as the U.S. prepared to co-host with Mexico and Canada, and had publicly stressed how that would help the World Cup run smoothly.

Infantino did not immediately comment on the issue, while FIFA released a statement on behalf of Artan.

"Despite the circumstances, I am in a positive mood and I am focused on the next challenges in my refereeing career," Artan said in the statement. "I would like to thank FIFA and (the African soccer confederation) for all their support and I promise to keep my refereeing levels up as I concentrate on the future."

"I want to thank the football family for their messages and wish my colleagues all the best success during the World Cup and I look forward to joining them again in future competitions."

**He was to make history for Somalia**  
Artan was praised as one of Africa's best referees and was the ref for the decisive leg of the African Champions League final last month — Africa's biggest club soccer game.

He spoke in a recent interview with the Al Jazeera TV network about how he was honored to be selected to be the first Somali to referee at the World Cup and how he faced challenges in his conflict-torn country in East Africa, including sometimes having to change his route to training because of explosions in the streets of the capital, Mogadishu.

"You cannot give up as a referee," Artan said in the interview. This (going to the World Cup) was my big, big target and I'm really excited." (AP)